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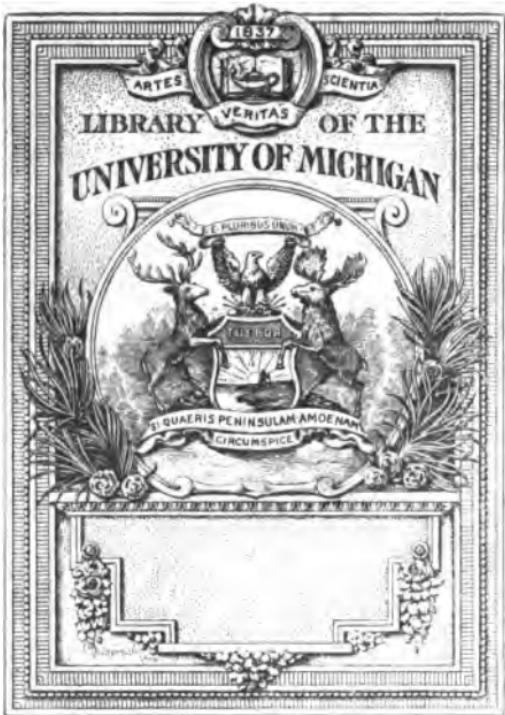
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Columbia University

***STUDIES IN ROMANCE PHILOLOGY
AND LITERATURE***

PIERRE LE TOURNEUR



PIERRE LE TOURNEUR

BY

MARY GERTRUDE CUSHING, PH.D.
=



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TO MY PARENTS

NOTE

THE following dissertation was examined by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures of Columbia University, and considered a valuable contribution to literary history, deserving to be accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

ADOLPHE COHN.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
September, 1908.



PREFACE

THIS volume aims to present a clear and connected account of a little-known and almost forgotten figure in French literature. The beginnings of the Romantic Movement in France in the latter part of the eighteenth century were aided and accelerated by the influence of English literature, and especially by the work of Young, Ossian, and Shakespeare. To Pierre Le Tourneur belongs the honor of having produced the first complete translations of these three poets, and of having made them known to his countrymen. A study of his life and work is, then, of distinct interest in the history of literary cosmopolitanism in France. No detailed treatment of the subject as a whole, such as the present essay attempts, has before been made. Lacroix in his *Influence de Shakespeare sur le Théâtre Français* (1856), Professor Lounsbury in *Shakespeare and Voltaire* (1902), and M. Jusserand in *Shakespeare in France under the Old Régime* (1899), devote certain chapters to valuable studies of the translation of Shakespeare. The

translation of Young is ably discussed by M. Thomas in his monumental work on Edward Young (1895) and by M. Joseph Texte in his *Jean Jacques Rousseau et le Cosmopolitanisme dans la Littérature Française* (1895). M. Texte also gives an interesting and suggestive survey of the translation of Ossian. No one of these scholars, however, has undertaken to give more than an incidental treatment of individual works. No careful study of the life and work of Le Tourneur, such as is proposed in the present monograph, has hitherto been attempted.

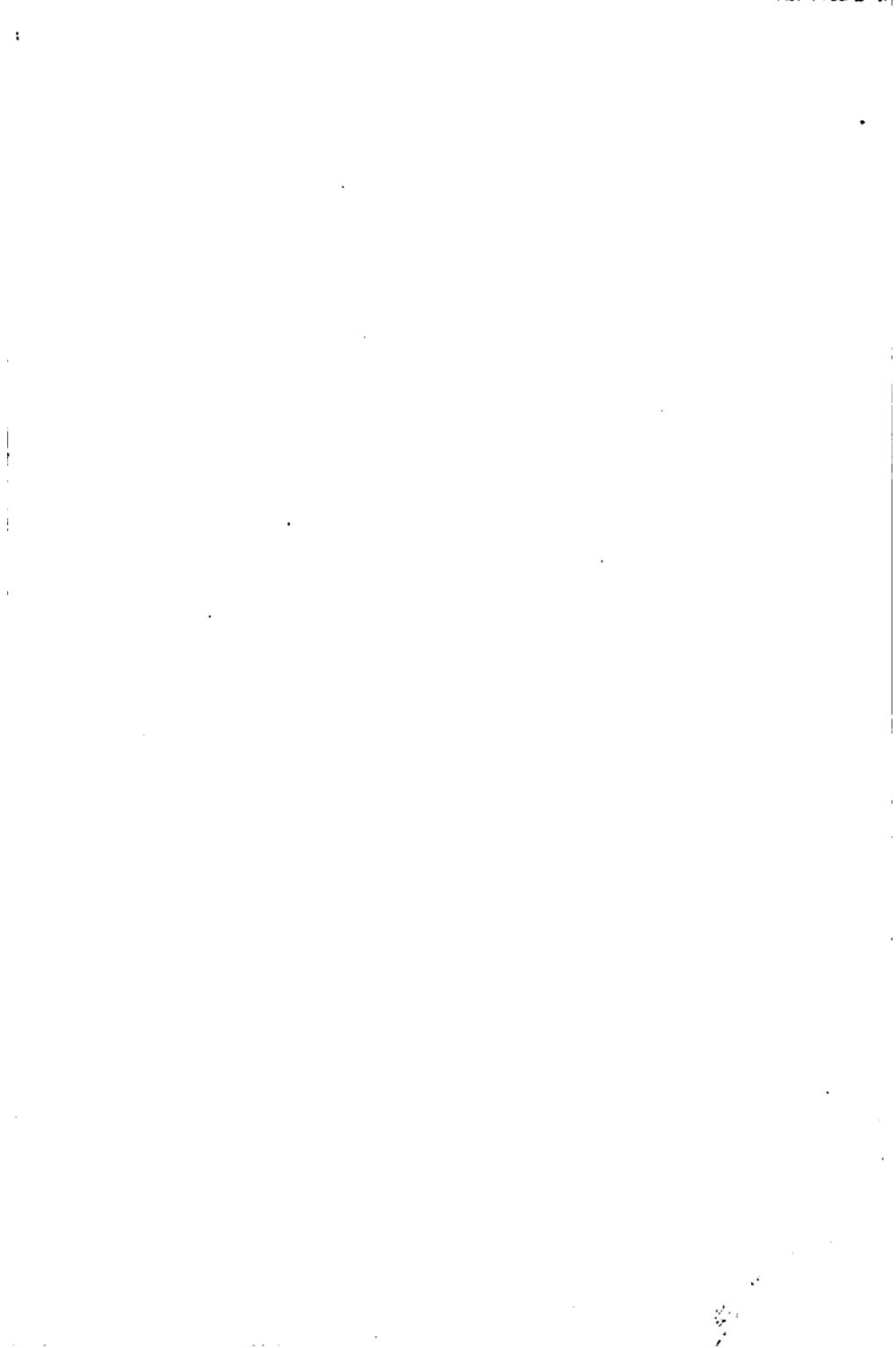
It is a pleasure to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks for courtesies extended to me by the officials of the Columbia University Library, and of the Bibliothèque Nationale; by M. Folliot of the Library in Valognes, Normandy, and by M. Lemarquand, Président de la Société Archéologique. To Professor Adolphe Cohn, I am indebted for the suggestion of my theme, for friendly criticism and counsel, and for help in reading proof.

M. G. C.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
June, 1908.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. LE TOURNEUR, THE MAN	1
II. THE WRITER OF ESSAYS AND EULOGIES .	21
III. THE INTERPRETER OF THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF MELANCHOLY: TRANSLATIONS OF YOUNG, HERVEY, AND OSSIAN	43
IV. MINOR TRANSLATIONS: ENGLISH, GERMAN, ITALIAN	103
V. THE TRANSLATOR OF SHAKESPEARE	154
VI. CONCLUSION	253
APPENDICES :	
A. Chronological List of Le Tourneur's Works	263
B. Hervey and Montaigne	266
C. Le Comte de Catuelan	268
D. Examples of Eighteenth-century Criticism of Le Tourneur's Translation of Shake- speare	270
E. Bibliography of Editions	277
F. Bibliography	290
General Bibliography	293
INDEX	305



I. LE TOURNEUR, THE MAN

THE study of the appreciation of Shakespeare in France is a theme of peculiar interest when viewed in relation to the development of European taste. In the history of no other nation is there so striking a picture of the gradual enlargement of dramatic taste through the influence of a single personality. The last quarter of the eighteenth century presents the beginning of a literary phase which is perhaps unique: a nation, opposed by training and education to the genius of Shakespeare, brought by the influence of that genius to admire and esteem what it had ignored as insignificant and despised as barbarian. The study of such a phase is suggestive, both in attesting the universality of Shakespeare and in throwing a clearer light upon the character and development of French taste.

One of the most important factors in this expansion of dramatic taste was the first complete translation of Shakespeare, by Pierre Le

Tourneur, the first volumes of which appeared in 1776 and the last in 1783. This was not only the first *complete* translation of the English poet, but the first of any literary value, and the one which served as the basis of all other French translations down to the middle of the nineteenth century. It was on the occasion of this translation that Voltaire raised his famous storm of criticism against Le Tourneur, and it was around this that was waged one of the most picturesque and one of the fiercest wars in the history of literature. The partial translations and analyses by La Place in 1745, the imitations and adaptations by Ducis in his *Hamlet*, 1769, and in his *Romeo et Juliet*, in 1772, and above all, Voltaire's brilliant criticism, begun as early as 1734 in the *Lettres Philosophiques*, had already made Shakespeare a familiar name in France and aroused an interest in his work. But as yet no complete or adequate translation existed. It remained for Pierre Le Tourneur, by his faithful and conscientious rendering, to enable the French people to judge for themselves concerning the beauties and defects of the great "barbarian" whom Voltaire seemed both to admire and to despise. Le Tourneur's

translation thus played a significant part in the history of the appreciation of Shakespeare in France. Its appearance marked an epoch in that expansion of taste which was to culminate later in the Romantic Movement, and on this account alone, a study of the life and work of its author is of interest to the student of literary cosmopolitanism.

But aside from his translation of Shakespeare, Le Tourneur has other claims to the consideration of posterity. His translations of Young and Ossian introduced to France the poetry of the English School of melancholy, and not only did much to increase interest in English literature, but exerted an appreciable influence on the development of French taste. In addition to his purely literary labors he held positions of responsibility and dignity. He was *Censeur Royal et Secrétaire général de la Librairie*, and *Secrétaire ordinaire de Monsieur*, brother of Louis XVI. Furthermore, he was a man of high character, of winning personality, and an able and conscientious worker. By his contemporaries he was regarded as a distinguished man of letters and an eminent translator. He won public esteem by three original *Discours*

which were awarded prizes in 1766 and 1767 by the Academies of Montauban and Besançon. A little later, he made a brilliant reputation for himself by his translations, or rather imitations, of Young's *Night Thoughts* in 1769 and Hervey's *Meditations on the Tombs* in 1770. At the time he began the publication of his translation of Shakespeare in 1776 he had already brought out a French version of Johnson's *Life of Savage* and one of *Thomson* and had collaborated in a translation of Robertson's *History of Charles V.* Shortly afterwards he produced a translation of *Ossian* and somewhat later one of *Clarissa Harlowe*. But he did not confine his attention wholly to English literature. Besides various other labors of minor importance he translated some of Ariosto's minor poems and two German works of travel. In addition, he found time to compose another original eulogy and left, at his death in 1788, the manuscript of the *Jardin Anglois, ou Variétés tant originales que traduites*, containing many original sketches and fugitive translations.

As the first complete translator of Shakespeare, Young, and Ossian, as a critic broad-minded and keen, far in advance of his time, as

a gracious and winning personality, Le Tourneur is worthy of being rescued from oblivion, and merits a place among those who have contributed to the growth and progress of human thought. For, by bringing the cultivated minds of his own country into contact with the best literature of other nations, he assisted Voltaire in developing that breadth of view and that just appreciation of literary excellence by means of which French criticism has attained its present eminent position.

Pierre Prime Félicien Le Tourneur was born in Basse Normandie, in the town of Valognes, now in the department of La Manche, June 9, 1737, and baptized the following day by Bernardin Félix Guillot, vicar of the town. His father was not present at the baptism of the child, and the boy was named by his god-parents, Pierre Vicq de Vallamprey and Marguerite Lonce, wife of Guillaume Le Tourneur. Although only about eleven miles from Cherbourg and on the direct line of railway communication between that city and Paris, Valognes is to-day a drowsy, picturesque town of some six thousand inhabitants, almost as devoid of life and

action as if it lay in an enchanted sleep. But in the eighteenth century it was an important place. It was the seat of a viscountcy, and famous for its manufactories of cloth and lace. It had its own independent governor, a fifteenth-century church, a college, and a library and was the residence of many marquises and barons who erected fine mansions and imitated as closely as possible the gaiety of Paris. Le Sage's comedy of *Turcaret*, performed in 1709, contains an interesting account of Valognes, in which he ridicules the provincial society which apes the life of the large city and prides itself on being "un petit Paris."¹

It was in this "little Paris," then, the home later of Burnouf (1821-) the oriental scholar, Gerville (1769-1853) the antiquarian, Pelouze (1807-1867) the chemist, and other distinguished men, that Pierre Le Tourneur first saw the light. His father, Thomas Le Tourneur, and his mother, Anne Hervieu, practised the trade of lace dealers in Valognes. They were, according to Pujos,² his chief biographer,

¹ Le Sage, *Turcaret*, Act V. Scene 7.

² M. Pujos, *Notice sur la Vie de Le Tourneur*, prefixed to *Le Jardin Anglois*.

neither rich nor noble, but upright and honest folk who endeavored to make up to their son for their lack of wealth and rank, by giving him the best education that their means could procure. "Le jeune Le Tourneur se montra digne de posséder ce bien," says Pujos; "on ne pouvoit l'arracher de dessus les livres." He was sent for his Humanities to Coutances, where he received a scholarship and where he was remarked for his serious and meditative turn of mind and his passionate love of study. Thence he went to the Collège des Grassins in Paris, where, on the completion of his *Rhétorique*, he won the first prize of the University. Under ordinary circumstances a young man would then leave college not later than eighteen years of age and it may, therefore, be conjectured that Le Tourneur finished his college career in 1754. His biographer, Pujos, however, gives at this point a somewhat vague and rather puzzling piece of information. "Son début littéraire," he says, "*au sortir des classes*, fut dans le genre oratoire. Il envoya des Discours très intéressans à plusieurs Académies, et mérita d'être couronné." At first sight, Pujos would seem by this to refer to two *Discours* addressed

to the Academies of Montauban and Besançon in 1766 and 1767, the earliest work of Le Tourneur of which there is any record, and which one would naturally infer to be his first essays in literature. But these *Discours* were "crowned" by the Academies to which they were presented, and if Pujos refers to them, it would make Le Tourneur remain in college till the age of thirty, a theory hardly tenable. On the other hand, if Le Tourneur graduated in 1754 and made his literary *début* soon after in other *Discours*, it is strange that they have been so completely lost.¹ It is to be regretted that Pujos did not see fit to be more explicit and did not state exactly what he meant by "au sortir des classes." But he evidently thought that a biographer need not confine himself to definite facts, exact dates, and accurate statements. He preferred to deal in broad outlines and general assertions, which certainly arouse the reader's interest by stimulating his curiosity.

¹ It is possible that the *Discours* of 1766 and 1767 were not the first essays in literature by Le Tourneur, but the first which received public recognition, and, therefore, the first considered worthy of notice by his biographer.

“M. Le Tourneur,” he says, after speaking of his literary début in the words already cited, “contrarié par une situation gênée, s’attacha à M. de la Briffe, alors Avocat Général au Grand Conseil: le plaidoyer que prononça ce Magistrat dans l’affaire d’un religieux, l’Abbé d’Orval, qui réclamoit contre ses vœux, excita une vive sensation et décela la touche du génie auquel nous allions devoir l’estimable traduction d’Young.”

It would appear from this that Le Tourneur was under the necessity of earning a livelihood and engaged in law as the most lucrative and honorable profession open to him. But it is not likely that a young man of so pronounced a literary taste and of so mild and retiring a disposition as Le Tourneur appears to have been should have thrown himself with anything but a temporary ardor into the profession he had chosen.

It was with difficulty that one of his old friends succeeded in overcoming his distaste for any kind of public life, and in 1771 persuaded him to accept the position of *Censeur Royal et Secrétaire Général de la Librairie*. “M. Le Tourneur remplit ses devoirs avec autant d’exactitude que de probité. S’il eut quelques en-

nemis," continues Pujos, with delicious naïveté, "c'est qu'il est impossible de n'en point avoir, et de contenter tout le monde, lorsqu'on a le malheur d'occuper le moindre poste qui nous mette en relation avec le Public."

But the gentleness and simplicity of Le Tourneur and his scholarly and retiring habits ill-fitted him to cope with the world into which he was plunged by the duties of his new position. Whether he lost it through lack of worldly wisdom, or whether he gave it up of his own free will, is not clear. Whatever the cause, in 1775 he "recovered his liberty," in the words of Pujos, and retired to Montrouge, then a suburb of Paris, where he devoted himself with enthusiasm to literature.

Le Tourneur had already made a name for himself in the world of letters by his moral essays and eulogies and by his adaptations of Young and Hervey. But although these early works of his were very favorably received, he abandoned, for the time being at least, all original composition, and began the work of translation which was to occupy him for the rest of his life. All kinds of literature attracted his tireless pen; the poetry of the school of melancholy

in the works of Young and Ossian, the drama of Shakespeare, the sentimental novel in *Clarissa Harlowe*, the moral tale and the essay, history, biography, and stories of exploration and travel, followed one another with astonishing rapidity during the twenty years of his literary career. The translation of a work on *Arctic Zoölogy*, published after his death, was the last of his long line of labors, and like the others, with the possible exception of Young, Shakespeare, and Ossian, was destined to fall into oblivion.

From the time of Le Tourneur's retirement to Montrouge in 1775, to his death in 1788, one event only in his life is mentioned by his biographer. He became at an unknown date *Secrétaire ordinaire de Monsieur*, brother of the king, who was to be later known as Louis XVIII. Le Tourneur was persuaded by his friends to solicit this position, and he obtained it, *moins flatté*, says Pujos, "de cette espèce de distinction qui auroit pu lui inspirer quelque vanité, qu'animé du désir d'être utile à *son fils*; il a fermé les yeux plein de l'espérance consolante que le grand Prince si digne d'appuyer les Beaux-Arts et auquel il avoit été attaché, con-

tinueroit d'étendre son auguste protection sur sa famille."

This would seem to indicate that Le Tourneur retained the position of Secretary up to the time of his death, and it is possible that he was permitted to perform the duties of his office at his own home, instead of being attached directly to the court. In 1779 he was living, or at least had a place of business, in the Hôtel de Valois, rue de Tournon, in Paris, and he died in the rue du Théâtre Français.¹

With the exception of a visit which he is said to have made to Valognes, in 1787, with Sébastien Mercier and another friend, it is probable that he passed the remainder of his life in his home at Montrouge or in Paris, surrounded by his friends and devoting his time and attention to literature. He was an indefatigable worker, and though hampered by an inherent weakness of constitution, he gave himself no rest from his labors even when his health had become broken by too close and unremitting application to study. Only a week before his death did he consent to lay down his pen, when

¹ *Journal de Paris*, Sun. Jan. 26, 1788; *Affiches, Annonces et Avis divers*, Jan. 28, 1788.

a disorder from which he had suffered for some months confined him to his room. He expired peacefully on the 22nd¹ or 24th² of January, 1788, and his body was interred in St. Sulpice³ on Sunday the 25th. Sébastien Mercier says that he left a widow and a son three years old,⁴ and this, together with the brief mention of his son by Pujos, already quoted, is almost the only information to be found concerning his family.⁵

¹ Desessarts, *Siècles Littéraires*, 1801, p. 256; *Journal de Normandie*, Feb. 9, 1788; Epitaph in *Année Littéraire*, 1788, Vol. II.—give Jan. 24.

² Ersch, *La France Littéraire*, 1789, vol. 3; *Journal Général de la France*, Feb. 17, 1788,—give Jan. 22.

³ *Affiches, Annonces et Avis divers*, Jan. 28, 1788.

⁴ *Journal de Paris*, Jan. 31, 1788.

⁵ The house in which Le Tourneur was born in Valognes stood close to the northern wall of the sacristy of the church of St. Malo. It was demolished in 1772 in order to widen the highroad from Cherbourg to Paris, and Le Tourneur was to receive an indemnity of 936 francs together with a grant of land near the château. Owing to administrative difficulties, however, Le Tourneur was paid only 400 francs indemnity. In 1811 Mme. V^e Le Tourneur, who had married M. César René Guyot Duclos, colonel du génie, and her son, Louis Eugène Félicien Le Tourneur, captain in the 8th regiment of foot artillery, made an unsuccessful public claim to the grant of land and the payment of the sum due.—*Mem. Soc. Arch. de Valognes*, 1885, III. pp. 49–59, article “Le Tourneur,” by Auguste Grou.

The year 1788, in which Le Tourneur died, was marked by the loss of a number of distinguished men. The *Journal de Normandie* for the 30th of April, 1788, notices this fact in an editorial enumerating the great men who had died within a few months. Almost all classes which might attract the attention of posterity, it says, are represented in this fatal list. There is a king, the Pretender; a prince of the church, the Cardinal de Luines; a distinguished man of letters, M. Le Tourneur; a great musician, Glück; a celebrated orator, M. Gerbier; a promising young painter, M. Drouais; the Tibullus of Germany, Gessner; an Amateur whose life had not lacked glory, d'Argental; and finally, a distinguished naturalist, Buffon. It is interesting to find Le Tourneur's name on this list of distinguished men, for although most of them are now remembered while he is forgotten, his contemporaries evidently considered him deserving of a place in the Temple of the Immortals.

Two epitaphs on Le Tourneur were published in current periodicals shortly after his death, and show that, at that time at least, he was more renowned for his rendering of Young's

Night Thoughts than for his translation of Shakespeare. The first is in the *Année Littéraire* for 1788 (Vol. II. p. 281):

**ÉPITAPHE DE M. LE TOURNEUR, MORT LE 24 JANVIER,
1788**

Ci-git l'éloquent le Tourneur,
D'Young l'imitateur fidèle ;
Si digne d'être un bon modèle,
Et par l'esprit et par le cœur ;
Sans éclat, sans Fauteuil, il termina sa vie,
Tandis que tel ou tel brille à l'Académie.

— Par M. DE SANCY.

The second is from the *Journal de Normandie*, April 9, 1788, and is as follows:

ÉPITAPHE DE M. LE TOURNEUR

Un sage a vu sa dernière heure :
En le frappant la mort nous a ravi
Un Écrivain sublime, un bon père, un ami,
Un tendre époux . . . Passant, arrête, et pleure !
L'Young Français repose ici.

— Par M. DE CONJON, de Bayeux.

Le Tourneur's life, as revealed by the account of Pujos and other biographical notices, was singularly barren of incident. Only a few events in his career stand out from the dim background; only a few facts and dates have been remembered and thought worthy of being

recorded, and diligent search for further and more accurate detail proves unavailing. But however indefinite and unsatisfactory biographical notices may be in regard to the events in Le Tourneur's life, they bear witness with one accord to the worth and charm of his personal character and attributes. Pujos, his chief biographer, Sébastien Mercier, his lifelong friend, Ersch, Sabatier, and Desessarts in their dictionaries of biography, and finally, the contemporary press, all unite in extolling him with an enthusiasm and sincerity which can hardly be other than genuine. According to their testimony, he was a man of upright character and marked ability, gentle and modest in manner, loyal and zealous in friendship, conscientious and assiduous in the performance of duty. A letter by Mercier, which appeared in the *Journal de Paris*, Jan. 31, 1788, is worth quoting at length, both for its sincere and affectionate eulogy and for its keen appreciation of the value of Le Tourneur's work.

AUX AUTEURS DU JOURNAL

Paris, 25 Jan., 1788.

MESSIEURS,— La République des Lettres vient de perdre un Écrivain distingué et moi un ami rare. Les belles traductions d'Young, d'Ossian, de Shakespeare, de Clarisse, etc., ont été généralement estimées et admirées. Elles ont imprimé à la langue françoise une force particulière et une précision nerveuse, quelque chose enfin, de l'accent anglois. C'est là une véritable conquête dont les Français pourront s'enorgueillir. La mémoire de M. Le Tourneur sera toujours honorée par les services qu'il a rendus aux Lettres en naturalisant parmi nous des Auteurs étrangers pleins de génie; mais qui peindra son caractère si profondément sensible, sa timidité intéressante, sa simplicité aimable qui le rapprochoit dans la vie privée du bon La Fontaine? Qui révélera l'énergie de son âme dans les hautes circonstances, sa sensibilité vraie et inépuisable, sa bonté dans tous les instants de sa vie?

Si une liaison intime et non interrompue de vingt-deux années peut donner ce droit, j'aurai à parler de l'homme qui a le mieux

cru à l'amitié, qui a tout fait pour elle, qui lui rendoit une espèce de culte; et quand j'aurai prouvé qu'il fut l'ami le plus tendre et le plus indulgent, je n'aurai pas de peine à convaincre qu'il fut un excellent homme.

Le monde l'a peu connu, sa vie laborieuse s'est écoulée sous les yeux de ses amis, qui ont joui exclusivement des trésors de son âme; jamais mortel ne fut plus doux et plus patient, tandis que son style étoit fier, énergique et véhément. Il vécut des jours pleins pour les Lettres et pour la Bienfaisance, voilà ce que la vérité pourra graver sur son tombeau. Il est mort dans sa 52^e année; il n'étoit d'aucune Académie. Il laisse une veuve, et un fils âgé de 3 ans.

Signé: MERCIER.

Pujos sounds the same note when speaking of the good qualities of Le Tourneur. He was a "digne citoyen, époux et père tendre, ami le plus zélé et le plus constant; sensible aux maux d'autrui, et soulageant le malheureux, quand sa situation le lui permettoit, et, au défaut des secours pécuniaires, recevant avec attendrissement l'épanchement de ses peines; la bienfaisance trouve toujours à se manifester; en un

mot, loin de se montrer en contrariété avec ses Ouvrages, leur donnant un nouveau prix, par le mérite que l'Homme ajoutoit à l'Écrivain: tel fut M. Le Tourneur, auquel survivra une réputation qui sera, nous n'en doutons point, confirmée par la Postérité." Thus Pujos concludes his sketch of Le Tourneur's life, and although the fame of his hero has hardly received from posterity the recognition which he felt it deserved, yet the memory of the high-minded and conscientious translator has survived, in spite of the oblivion in which the greater part of his works is slumbering.

Like Corneille, he had in society the candor and the timidity of a child, and his conversation was as gentle as his manners. His house was the image of peace and happiness. He was a stranger to every feeling of hatred, jealousy, or ill-will, far removed from vexatious ambition and literary rivalry. A tender husband and father, a faithful and constant friend, he spent calm and laborious days in the company of his family, his friends, and the literary pursuits he loved. All speak of him with affection and regret, as one whose charm and whose virtues were an example to all men, and whose

work deserved to win him a place in the Academy.

Finally, as an epitome of the general opinion upon Le Tourneur, may be cited the anonymous lines beneath the portrait of him, drawn from life, it is said, by A. Pujos, in 1788:¹

“Ne croyant que traduire, il créa ses Écrits:
Doux, sensible et modeste, il ignora sa gloire.
Il ne mourra jamais au temple de Mémoire,
Ni dans le cœur de ses amis.”

¹ There is an engraving of this portrait in the Public Library of Valognes, and a reproduction of it is to be found in *Shakespeare in France under the Old Régime*, by J. J. Jusserand, London, 1899, p. 353. The original is in the Département des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

II. THE WRITER OF ESSAYS AND EULOGIES

ALTHOUGH Le Tourneur is now remembered only as a translator, at the beginning of his literary career he was regarded by his contemporaries as a promising writer of no small original ability. The serious and philosophic turn of mind, which was so marked a feature of his college days, found expression some years later in the publication, in 1768, of a slender volume of a hundred and seventy-six pages, containing three moral essays and a eulogy of Charles V.¹ In 1766 and 1767 the Academies of Montauban and of Besançon offered prizes for the best essays upon certain given subjects. Le Tourneur entered the lists as a competitor, and his essays won the offered reward. The *Discours* which was "crowned" by the Acad-

¹ *Discours moraux couronnés dans les Académies de Montauban et de Besançon en 1766 et 1767 avec un Éloge de Charles V. roi de France*, par Mxxx, Paris, 1768, 176 pp. Also reprinted in *Le Jardin Anglois*, Paris, 1788.

emy of Montauban is the best and most interesting of the three. It discusses, in some forty pages, the question : "Est-il utile à la Société que le Cœur de l'homme soit un mystère ?" The subject is treated with considerable skill, and the style, though somewhat rhetorical, has a certain naïve earnestness of conviction which goes far to enlist the sympathy of the reader. Le Tourneur's answer to the question is in the affirmative, and his reason, briefly stated, is that the minds of men are too feeble, their self-love too strong, to permit them to live together in peace and harmony if they could read the truth in one another's hearts. An introductory statement of the fact that man's knowledge of his fellow-man is at best but obscure and shadowy is followed by the question of the essay, and the argument is carried on in dialogue form between an old man and a youth. The young man first answers the question in the negative, and, with all the enthusiasm of youth, sets forth the crimes committed, the innocent condemned, the friendships destroyed, and other evils of society due to men's ignorance of one another — their motives, their temptations, their struggles. The old man replies to his ardor:

“ Mais, malgré les maux affreux, qui me font hâter vers le tombeau, que j'entrevois déjà, malgré quelques autres que la connaissance parfaite du cœur de l'homme pourroit peut-être prévenir; reste, jeune homme, paisible et résigné dans l'obscurité qui t'environne. Crois qu'elle est nécessaire à la Société. Crois-en l'auteur de la nature. C'est pour notre bien qu'il nous a condamnés tous à cette ignorance réciproque; il a prévu que les cœurs en devenant vicieux et mauvais devoient rester cachés l'un à l'autre. Crois en ta raison. Si tu l'interroges dans le silence de la retraite, elle te dira que si les cœurs se voyoient mutuellement, l'amitié, l'espérance, l'estime, tous les liens les plus doux et les plus forts qui unissent la Société seroient brisés ou affoiblis, que la vertu y perdroit, et que la Société même ne pourroit guères manquer de se dissoudre.”

After this grandiloquent beginning, the old man takes up each point of his opponent's argument, one after another, and proves, to his own satisfaction at least, the diminution of virtue, the disappearance of friendship and esteem, and the destruction of society, as the result of man's exact knowledge of the human heart. Here

and there are phrases that ring like an echo of La Rochefoucauld.¹ Yet the tone of the essay throughout is optimistic, and the effect of its smoothly flowing phrases is like that of a broad and gently moving river, serene and calm under a summer sun.

The other two *Discours* which took prizes at the Academy of Besançon in 1766 and 1767 treat of more ordinary subjects: (1) "Il importe autant aux Nations qu'aux Particuliers d'avoir une bonne réputation." (2) "Combien

¹ "Les larmes que nous versons sur nos propres maux sont bien plus brûlantes que celles que nous répandons sur les maux d'autrui."

"Nous aimons mieux nous aveugler encore sur les autres, que de les voir trop éclaircis sur nous-mêmes."

"Nous ne nous croyons parfaits, que lorsque nous nous comparons aux autres; dès que nous ne regardons que nous seuls nous sentons malgré nous nos imperfections."

"En lisant dans l'âme des autres, nous saurions qu'ils lisent aussi dans la nôtre. Nous craignons bien plus d'être devinés que nous n'aimons à deviner les autres hommes. Leur surprendre un défaut n'est au plus qu'un plaisir délicat qui chatouille notre orgueil, mais être surpris par eux dans les nôtres, c'est une douleur vive qui nous déchire l'âme. Pourrions-nous nous empêcher de haïr les témoins oculaires et perpétuels de notre misère et de notre honte? La vue réciproque de leurs vices et de leurs défauts ne nous consolerait pas plus que la vue d'un malheureux n'en console un autre."

le Courage d'Esprit est nécessaire dans tous les États." The first is the more ambitious of the two in treatment, consisting of a formal introduction and two parts. The line of argument is clear and logical, and, in spite of a tendency to rhetoric and occasional bombast, the style rises to moments of real eloquence and has more than one touch of literary grace. The Introduction states the interdependence of men and the necessity of a good reputation in their needs and pleasures. The First Part obviously discusses the value of a good reputation among individuals. It is an aid in enjoying good fortune, in winning public and private esteem, it consoles and protects in misfortune and is the necessary accompaniment of virtue. With nations, a good reputation is even more important than with individuals, inasmuch as their life is longer and more complex, and their influence more widespread. The treatment of this statement occupies Part II, and the author finds his proofs in examples from history, which he quotes with aptness and conviction, showing that those nations with a reputation for justice, virtue, and good faith have prospered and endured, while others have fallen through their

own weakness and corruption. The whole essay, says the *Journal des Savants* (March, 1771), may be regarded as a refutation of Machiavellism: "La nation la plus juste doit devenir à la fin la plus puissante."

"Qu'est-ce donc que le courage d'esprit?" asks Le Tourneur, at the beginning of the third *Discours*. "Rien autre chose," he answers, "que la force de vouloir être ce que nous sommes nécessairement par notre nature, en nous appuyant de l'intime conviction que la vertu est le premier besoin de l'homme. . . . Vouloir, c'est tout dans la vie." With this as the keynote, he develops, with a good deal of ingenuity, an almost Epicurean system of philosophy. Like a good reputation, "le Courage d'Esprit" is the touchstone of life, which aids man in joy, consoles him in sorrow, and inspires him to deeds of heroism. Towards the close of the essay are two references to men of letters, Milton¹ and

¹ "Pauvre, accablé de maux, sans consolation, sans appui, privé de la vue et des illusions charmantes qui soutiennent la jeunesse, c'est au sein des douleurs et de l'infortune que *Milton* dessine les bocages d'Éden. Son cœur flétrí par les approches de la mort n'est ramené que par l'amour de la gloire. . . . C'est au bord de son tombeau qu'il érige le monument de sa gloire." p. 119.

Voltaire¹: the former significant as showing Le Tourneur's acquaintance with English literature thus early in his career; the latter, interesting as the first expression of the admiration he always manifested for his great compatriot.

The *Éloge de Charles V. roi de France*, the last essay in the volume, competed for a prize offered by the French Academy in 1767. Le Tourneur failed in this contest, the prize being actually won by La Harpe,² although success was attributed to him by at least one enthusiastic journal.³ Both writers follow practically the same line of argument. Each eulogy is divided formally into an Introduction and two parts, and each discusses Charles V. under the double

¹ "Et toi, l'honneur de la France et de ton siècle, réponds : immortel Voltaire, quand tu arrives à cet âge, sans doute prématûr pour toi, où l'homme commence à se juger lui-même, et à connoître la mesure de ses facultés, prêt à parcourir ton immense carrière, ne juras-tu point dans ton cœur de remplir avec courage la sublime tâche que t'imposoient la nature et ton génie ? Combien de fois le courage a-t-il affermi dans tes mains les pinceaux de la Poésie et le burin de l'Histoire que l'envie en fureur vouloit t'arracher ?" p. 119.

² *Éloge de Charles V. Roi de France qui a remporté le Prix de l'Académie françoise en 1767*, par M. de la Harpe, Paris, 1767.

³ *Journal Encyclopédique*, October, 1768.

aspect of Restorer and Protector of his people. That of Le Tourneur is, on the whole, less spontaneous and more labored in style than his *Discours Moraux*, less interesting and less convincing than that of La Harpe. Le Tourneur falls here frequently into his favorite vice of fine writing and the interest occasionally flags, lost in a maze of detail. He seems to struggle, by the use of flamboyant language and rhetorical apostrophe, to express an eloquence which he does not feel, and to atone for his own lack of conviction by an atmosphere of almost hysterical hero-worship. The following lines will show one of his attempts at eloquence :

“ L'astre de l'Univers nous emporte autour de lui sur la terre, nous nous croyons indépendans, nous nous sentons détachés du globe lumineux qui nous meut avec le nôtre. Ainsi Charles par un mouvement insensible, entraîna constamment les François vers le bonheur. Le flambeau de sa vie, en s'éteignant, alluma celui de la gloire sur sa tombe, il y a reçu le salaire des Rois dans les larmes de son Peuple.”

The Introduction, which is the best part of the Essay, is rather far-fetched, but perhaps quaint enough in conception to warrant summa-

rizing. In Egypt, begins *Le Tourneur*, it was the custom, at the death of a ruler, for a tribunal to assemble and pronounce judgment upon his life and reign. If he were declared wise and beneficent, his remains were buried with pomp and glory, and there was written on his tomb: "Here he continues to reign." If, on the contrary, he had been unjust and cruel, his body was destroyed and his name became a byword of dishonor. This custom, though unperceived and generally unknown, survives among us to-day. *Truth* is the tribunal which observes the sovereigns of the world as they pass, pronounces judgment upon them, and hands their names on to History to be preserved with everlasting glory or shame. Truth has passed judgment upon Charles V. and proclaimed him *sage*. "C'est elle qui appelle encore aujourd'hui les Arts pour rendre dans leur Temple un hommage public à leur premier Protecteur, au Restaurateur de la France."

But perhaps the most noteworthy thing in the essay is the concluding lines, in which *Le Tourneur* makes a significant criticism upon the system of education which he had received. After naively expressing the hope that if his Eulogy does not receive the prize, the winner

will be at least a Frenchman and not a foreigner, he concludes:

“ Ce Sage me fut longtems inconnu ! Vous qui fatiguiez ma jeune mémoire des noms des conquérans et des Tyrans de Rome, vous ne m'aviez point prononcé son nom.”

This Eulogy, as well as the *Discours Moraux*, was favorably received by the public, and highly commended by contemporary critics.¹ The young author had every encouragement to continue, but, with the exception of one slight sketch, it was not until ten years later that he again entered the field of literature as a distinctly original writer.

In 1766 there appeared in the *Nécrologie des Hommes célèbres*² an “*Éloge de Clairaut*”³ the

¹ “ L'auteur sçait réfléchir, il sçait penser, il sçait écrire ; il mérite les plus grands encouragements, et parmi ceux qui briguent les couronnes académiques, il en est peu qui soient entrés dans cette carrière avec plus de talent.” — *Année Littéraire*, July 7, 1768.

“ M. M*** mérite des éloges, puisque sans être ni diffus ni trop concis, il a eu l'art d'épuiser ses sujets sans tomber dans la prolixité, de ne laisser au Lecteur rien à désirer sans cependant en dire trop, et de descendre dans les plus grands détails sans cesser d'être intéressant.” — *Journal Encyclopédique*, October, 1768.

² *Nécrologie des Hommes célèbres de France*, Paris, 1766.

³ Alexis Claude Clairaut (1713–1765), mathematician and

celebrated mathematician, which may be Le Tourneur's first published attempt at literary composition. It is a slight, colorless sketch of the life and work of Clairaut and would deserve only a word of mention were it not for a possible doubt as to its authorship. In the *Nécrologie* it is attributed to M. Fontaine, probably Fontaine-Malherbe, who wrote for the same volume a eulogy of Carl van Loo, the painter. The same article, however, with slight verbal changes and abridgments,¹ is reprinted in *Le Jardin Anglois*,² a posthumous work of Le Tourneur. In the matter of internal evidence the weight of proof is slightly in favor of Le Tourneur, although this slender sketch shows less marked characteristics of style than a more ambitious work. However, inasmuch as Fontaine was already a successful contributor to the *Nécrologie*, it seems not improbable that if

astronomer, friend of Maupertuis and Mme. du Châtelet, Member of Academies of Paris, London, Berlin, author of *Elements of Geometry*, *Algebra*, etc.

¹ The "Éloge de Clairaut" in the *Nécrologie* contains some mediocre verses said to be addressed to Clairaut by Voltaire, and omitted in *Le Jardin Anglois*.

² *Le Jardin Anglois*, Paris, 1788, Vol. I. Also attributed to Le Tourneur by Ersch, *La France Littéraire*, 1811, article "Le Tourneur."

the two were friends,¹ the essay might be by Le Tourneur, even though printed under the name of another—a custom not uncommon at the time. Moreover, it seems unlikely that so zealous a friend as Le Tourneur's biographer, Pujos, who wrote the Preface for *Le Jardin Anglois*, should have been ignorant of the authorship of the article, and should have consented to the publication in the works of his hero of so trivial an essay by another.

The year following the publication of the *Discours Moraux*, Le Tourneur began the work of translation which was to occupy him for the rest of his life. Ten years afterwards, remembering perhaps his first success, he paused long enough in his translation of Shakespeare to publish in 1778 an *Éloge du Maréchal du Muy*,² which won him another prize, this time at the Academy of Marseilles. It is a distinct advance in style and composition upon the *Éloge*

¹ Fontaine-Malherbe was associated with Le Tourneur in the work of the first two volumes of the translation of Shakespeare, 1776.

² *Éloge de M. le Maréchal du Muy, qui a remporté le prix du jugement de l'Académie de Marseille, le 25 août 1778*, par M. Le Tourneur. Bruxelles et Paris, 1778, p. 159. Also reprinted in *Le Jardin Anglois*, Paris, 1788, Vol. II.

de Charles V. The story of Du Muy's life is told with simplicity, clearness, and directness. The charm of his personality, his singleness of purpose, his valor, his virtues, his deep religious feeling, his disinterested devotion, like a second Agricola, to the Dauphin and to his country, are brought out with singular distinctness and persuasive eloquence. The whole eulogy is as clear-cut as a cameo ; it is like a curious antique gem in an old-fashioned setting. The closing lines may be cited as an example of Le Tourneur's skill in peroration :

“Vertueux du Muy, homme de bien, c'est sous ce titre que ton nom sera consacré dans les fastes de notre Histoire, il suivra nos derniers Neveux dans une éternelle société, le nom du Prince à qui tu fus dévoué : ta mémoire sera toujours chère à son auguste Fils, que tu as servi trop peu de tems ; mais ton âme immortelle le sert encore auprès de l'Être suprême. Oui, du haut des Cieux où tu as rejoint son auguste Père, tu t'intéresses toujours avec lui au bonheur de la France ; tous deux vous continuez d'inspirer le cœur du jeune Roi qui nous promet le règne des Mœurs, des Lois et de la Religion, tous deux vous contemplez

d'un regard satisfait les transports naissans de la Nation dans l'Espérance prochaine d'un Héritier qui rassemble les vertus de l'Ayeul et du Père. Si le ciel daigne l'accorder à nos vœux nous n'aurons plus qu'une prière à lui adresser sur son berceau: nous lui demanderons encore un Sage tel que Du Muy pour former sa jeunesse, et un Trône toujours entouré de Ministres qui lui ressemblent."

This eulogy, slight and simple though it is, stands unique among Le Tourneur's works. With the exception of the Shakespeare quarrel, it called forth the only unfavorable criticism to be found anywhere among his contemporaries during his entire literary career of twenty years. The eulogy was reviewed and warmly commended in a letter to the *Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire* in November, 1778.¹ On Dec. 19 appeared, in the same periodical,² a scathing criticism of it, apparently by one of those "enemies whom it is impossible to be without," in the words of the astute Pujos. That the satire was prompted by a

¹ *Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire*, London, 1787, 18 vols., Vol. VII. p. 109, Nov. 14, 1778.

² *Ibid.* 19, December, 1778, in *La Pétaudière*, p. 179.

spirit of carping criticism, rather than by a desire to be impartially and keenly just, may be seen by a few amusing examples. Le Tourneur had dedicated his eulogy to Madame la Maréchale du Muy, beginning in the following terms:

“MADAME, C'est à vous que je dois offrir la couronne accordée à cette foible esquisse, jugée la plus ressemblante à l'homme vertueux que la France regrette avec vous. L'hommage public et sincère que j'ai rendu à sa mémoire appartient aussi à la tendre et vertueuse épouse qui lui survit.”

“La première phrase seule,” says the critic, “invite à fermer le livre. Quelle est *la couronne accordée à l'esquisse* de M. Le Tourneur? Ne sont-ce pas la médaille et les lauriers qui l'accompagnent? Ce n'est pas là cependant, ce que l'Orateur offre à Madame la Maréchale. Il n'a donc pas dit ce qu'il vouloit dire. C'est l'*esquisse* qui a obtenu la couronne qu'il présente à Madame du Muy, et non la couronne accordée à l'*Esquisse*. Ce qui suit n'est guère plus heureux. *Qui lui survit*, est de trop; car, si vous dédiez à Madame du Muy l'éloge de son mari mort, il est évident qu'*elle lui survit*. L'usage n'est pas de dédier ses ouvrages aux

morts. . . . Voyons l'esquisse et gardons nous de nous appesantir sur les détails. . . . Voici le commencement:

“Combien d'hommes célèbres chez qui la gloire ou la vertu ne furent qu'un hasard!”

“Je crois que le mot *hasard* qui est très bien appliqué à la *gloire*, convient très mal à la *vertu*, et que cette pensée ainsi exprimée n'est pas vraie. ‘Sans la fortune qui fit la moitié de l'œuvre, sans les passions qui exaltèrent leur courage et les élevèrent par intervalle au-dessus d'eux mêmes, ils auraient vécu sans mérite et seroient morts sans renommée.’

“*Qui fit la moitié de l'œuvre* est trivial et le reste ne présente rien que de commun. Qui ne sait pas que sans les passions, l'homme est nul? Et c'est précisément ce que l'orateur a délayé en trois lignes glaciales. Plus bas, on voit une *lacune immense et stérile qui n'a rien produit*.¹ Je désirerois savoir quelles sont les lacunes fécondes et si le mot *stérile* dit moins que *qui n'a rien produit*. Voilà ce qu'on ne

¹ “Le cours de leur vie est semé de quelques actions éclatantes; tout le reste de l'espace qu'ils ont parcouru, présente une lacune immense et stérile qui n'a rien produit ou que le vice a fouillée.”

craint pas d'appeler aujourd'hui de l'éloquence."

The critic continues in this way, attacking the unfortunate eulogy, word by word, phrase by phrase, until the editor, who is apparently quite out of sympathy with his contributor, apologetically spares the reader the last seven pages. In spite of this single voice of protest, however, Le Tourneur's fame, which was then well established by his esteemed translations of Young and Shakespeare, suffered no diminution. He did, indeed, give up original work, but he had already been engaged for ten years in the interpretation of English literature rather than in contributions to his own. Absorbed as he was more and more deeply in the work of translation, it was not until ten years more had passed that he took time for another original essay, which was published shortly after his death.

The *Voyage à Ermenonville* was written to serve as preface to an edition of Rousseau, published by Poinçot in 1788.¹ The first

¹ *Voyage à Ermenonville*, par feu M. Le Tourneur pour servir de Préface. Œuvres complètes de J. J. Rousseau, Poinçot. Paris, 1788, Vol. I. pp. 60-176.

volume contains an introduction by Mercier, who was a lifelong and intimate friend of Le Tourneur, and it seems probable that the sketch was undertaken at his suggestion. It is an account of the author's visit to the tomb of Rousseau in the company of two Englishmen whom he had met in Bourgogne. He acceded willingly to their invitation to accompany them in the capacity of friend and guide : "curieux d'être témoin des impressions que feroit la vue de ce lieu sur l'âme dédaigneuse d'un Anglois, d'autant plus curieux que mes deux nouveaux compagnons de voyage savoient sentir et s'exprimer dans notre langue et qu'ils ne manquaient ni d'imagination ni de sensibilité."¹

An interesting discussion as to the relative merits of French and English landscape gardening takes place at Chantilly, where the travelers spend a night on their way to Ermenonville. The Frenchman, after vainly trying to convince his companions of the superiority of the French garden, suggests a combination of the two styles as a perfect model. Finding that even this generous compromise is only half-heartedly received, he takes refuge in good-natured

¹ p. 61.

raillery, and declares that each style of garden is but the expression of the national character.

“ Celui du Fran ois dans ses jardins me semble assez analogue ´a son humeur et ´a son moral. Franc, ouvert, ne d guisant rien, impatient, il aime ´a offrir ´a la fois aux regards tout ce qu’il a de richesse et de magnificence : l ger et voleuse, il aime ´a embrasser tout d’un coup d’oeil, comme un mot d voile toute son me, comme sa confiance se donne en un moment ´a la physionomie ´a laquelle il se pr vient. L’Anglois, au contraire, moins communicatif, plus sombre, plus ferm , se cache et se retire dans les ombres et les d tours ; il ne s’ouvre ´a la confiance et ne se laisse p n trer que par degr s ; il faut du tems pour parcourir tout son int rieur. Ses jardins sont comme son me. Le Fran ois met tout dehors sous l’oeil de l’tranger : l’Anglois ne se montre et ne se d veloppe que pi ce ´a pi ce.”¹

The rest of the sketch consists of a detailed description of the gardens of Ermenonville, together with an account of Rousseau’s installation there and his last moments, related by a guide at the request of the Englishmen, who are so profoundly impressed with all they see

¹ p. 85.

and hear that they preserve a reverent silence, and thus relieve Le Tourneur of the labor of noting down their sentiments.¹

“L’âme occupée et agréablement affectée” will perhaps be the effect also upon the modern reader of this pleasantly written essay. Like the moral essays and the eulogies, it has the delicate, individual charm of an old-fashioned garden, an atmosphere like the perfume of lavender and old lace. Besides its intrinsic value, it reveals one or two interesting facts concerning the author. He speaks in the beginning of having known Rousseau personally.² This, of course, is possible, but it is the only reference to be found concerning the acquaintance. He had been in Bourgogne;

¹ “Le lecteur qui ne trouve plus de réflexions de mes deux Anglois jugera aisément par leur silence que leur âme étoit occupée et agréablement affectée.” p. 136.

² “Je ne me vanterai point d’avoir été son ami, mais je l’avois vu de tems en tems dans le cours de quatre années, tantôt dans la société, tantôt sous l’humble toit de son quatrième étage; et quoique cette liaison, tout respect de ma part et de la sienne estime et bienveillance, ait brusquement fini par un procédé bizarre d’après les règles sociales mais sans doute conséquent à ses principes ou à ses foiblesses, je n’en fus que surpris un moment sans être offensé, et je conserverai toujours une juste admiration pour son génie, et un tendre sentiment pour sa personne.” p. 1.

he probably did not speak English, since the party conversed in French, and apparently had not visited England.¹ The style of the essay, the turn of phrase, the general atmosphere throughout, is very like Le Tourneur, yet it is possible that it was not original with him, but was the translation or imitation of something he had read in English. The reason for doubt is a note, presumably by the editor, at the end of the essay: "Il paroît que l'auteur anglois du *Voyage à Ermenonville* a induit en erreur l'imitateur françois. La statue équestre qui se voit à Chantilly et dont il est question à la page 81 n'est point celle du duc de Montmorency, etc." (G. B.)²

It seems probable, however, that the note itself is a mistake, and that for *auteur anglois*, should be read *personnage anglois*. For it is unlikely that an English writer should speak in the person of a Frenchman accompanying two Englishmen, as does the author of this sketch, that he should characterize his own

¹ "Je n'ai point vu leurs jardins fameux ni Stowe ni Blenheim." p. 91.

² "Cette statue (spoken by milord) équestre que voilà devant le palais est celle de ce connétable fait prisonnier à la bataille de Castelnaudary et décapité à Toulouse." p. 81.

nation as *dédaigneuse*, and should uphold with such warmth the value of French gardens, etc. But if, nevertheless, the essay was by an English writer, it was doubtless very freely rendered or adapted by Le Tourneur until, for all practical purposes, it became an original composition. However it may be, the *Voyage à Ermenonville* was the last original work attributed to Le Tourneur and published separately from his translations. That his original literary output was so small must be a matter of regret to the modern world as it was to his contemporaries. The sincerity of his feeling, the breadth and tolerance of his views, the clearness and keenness of his judgment, his gift of insight and literary appreciation, might easily, it would seem, have won him a place and a name in the history of oratory or criticism.

III. THE INTERPRETER OF THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF MELAN- CHOLY: TRANSLATIONS OF YOUNG, HERVEY, AND OSSIAN

THE *Discours Moraux* of 1768 had attracted considerable attention and received much favorable comment. Le Tourneur was already talked of in literary circles as a rising young author who was destined to make a name for himself in the world of letters. It is not improbable that, if he had continued to follow the path upon which he had entered, he might have come down to posterity as an eloquent orator or critical essayist. But unfortunately for the hopes of his friends, Le Tourneur was caught in the great flood of enthusiasm for English literature which swept over France in the latter half of the eighteenth century and was at its height between 1760 and 1789. He was straightway converted from an essayist to a

translator and on his translations rests whatever fame he may enjoy to-day.

As early as 1767 he was acquainted with the work of Milton, and had probably even then made fugitive translations from *Paradise Lost*, which were later incorporated in the posthumous *Jardin Anglois*.

The year following the appearance of the *Discours Moraux*, Le Tourneur published his first translations, two slight sketches, entitled: *La Jeune fille séduite* and *Le Courtisan Hermite*.¹ From this as a starting-point, he practically abandoned the field of original composition which he had just so successfully entered, and later in the same year leaped with one bound into fame and glory by his translation of the *Night Thoughts* of Edward Young. This change of work on his part is not surprising in view of the Anglo-mania which was then the fashion, and the business of interpretation not only favored the current of popular taste, but afforded the aspirant to literary honors a rapid, if laborious, road to reputation.

Le Tourneur's first attempt at translation

¹ *La Jeune fille séduite et Le Courtisan Hermite*, traduites de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1769, p. 51.

brought him favor, but not fame. *La Jeune fille séduite* and *Le Courtisan Hermite* are short moral tales whose subjects are perhaps sufficiently indicated by their titles. Almost entirely without local color or marked characteristics of style, it has been impossible to discover the English originals among the countless similar tales which filled the periodicals of the day. The first relates the story of a young girl led astray by the woman to whose charge she had been confided. After years of a life of shame, she retires with lost beauty and shattered health to Tunbridge, where she resolves to write her story as a warning to others of her sex. In *Le Courtisan Hermite* an aged courtier tells Polydore, a youth who passes his retreat, by chance, the story of his disillusionment at court and his withdrawal from the world. His closing words, quoted with favorable comment by leading journals,¹ will give an example both of the moral tone and of the style.

“Quelque situation, quelque genre de vie que vous désiriez, et que vous vous proposiez de vous procurer, ne vous laissez pas séduire

¹ *L'Avant Coureur*, September, 1769; *Mercure de France*, September, 1769.

par les avantages qu'il vous promet et songez à vous faire une idée claire et distincte de tous les désagréments qui y sont attachés. Moi, après un mois d'expérience, j'ai dédaigné, j'ai rejeté avec dégoût ce même poste que j'avois employé toute ma vie à désirer et à obtenir."

Not least in interest among the phases of English life and thought which attracted French Anglomaniacs was the so-called Grave Yard School of poets, or the literature of melancholy, represented by the writings of Gray, Milton, Collins, and Young. In France the way had been prepared for the appreciation of such literature, first by the translation of Richardson's sentimental novels, then by the work of the sensitive, romantic, and mystic Rousseau. Thus, in 1760, the appearance of a small volume entitled : *Pensées Angloises sur divers sujets de religion et de morale*,¹ a series of reflections drawn from the *Night Thoughts* of Edward Young, was cordially received. The taste for meditations upon death and immortality was encouraged by literary men, who, seeing which way the wind of public desire was blowing, hastened to set their sails in that direction and to follow this newly acquired

¹ Amsterdam, 1760.

fashion. In 1762 the Comte de Bissy, a member of the French Academy and lieutenant-general of Languedoc, made a translation of the first *Night Thought*, which was published in the *Journal Étranger*. This met with instant and phenomenal success, and was the first of a series of translations of one or more *Nights* in a spirited rivalry among literary men as to who should be the first or best interpreter of the melancholy poet. Such an increase of interest prepared the way for an enthusiastic reception of the complete translation of the *Night Thoughts*, and Le Tourneur, whose serious and contemplative spirit was naturally attracted by the gloomy and philosophic meditations of Young, set to work to gratify the public desire. In 1769 appeared the *Nuits d' Young*,¹ and in the following year, his *Oeuvres diverses*. The success of this work was very great, its reception most cordial, and its influence remarkable, in view of its character and subject. Although followed by a host of other translations more

¹ *Les Nuits d' Young*, traduites de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1769, 2 vols.

The *Nuits* were sold for 20 louis (gold) to Mme. Ducroné, who made 60,000 livres out of the transaction.—*Curiosités Bibliographiques*, L. Lalanne, Paris, 1845, p. 358.

or less complete, it remained the most popular, the most widely known, and was the standard translation of Edward Young as long as he was read in France.

The translation was preceded by a curious and interesting *Discours préliminaire* of some sixty pages, in which Le Tourneur relates the life of Young, enlarges upon his virtues as a man and his beauties as a poet, states his own reason for undertaking the work, and explains his method of translation. The modern reader, not greatly interested, perhaps, either in Young's *Night Thoughts* in English for their own sake, nor in a French translation of them, will yet find pleasure in reading this introductory essay, not only for the quaint charm of its old-fashioned, pompous style, but also for the revelation of the naïve and earnest spirit of the author and the literary methods of the eighteenth century.

Le Tourneur was happily endowed with one of the qualities most necessary in a pioneer. He believed thoroughly in the value of his work; an enthusiastic hero-worship of whatever author he happened to be translating at the time is characteristic of all his critical prefaces, and is so contagious as to communicate itself, in some

degree, to the reader, almost before he is aware. The opening sentences of this *Discours* are no exception to the rule :

“ Si Edward Young n'eût été qu'un habile théologien d'Angleterre, sa vie intéresseroit peu la postérité. Le mérite du docteur est ignoré de l'Europe et déjà oublié, dans sa patrie ; mais le grand poète, l'écrivain original est sûr d'accompagner à l'immortalité les Swift, les Shaftesbury, les Pope, les Addison, les Richardson dont il fut ou l'ami ou l'associé littéraire. Il eut part au célèbre ouvrage du Spectateur. Il a survécu le dernier de ce groupe d'auteurs fameux qui ont illustré l'Angleterre et le commencement de notre siècle. Young eut moins de goût que ces écrivains, mais on diroit qu'il dédaigna d'en avoir. Ennemi jusqu'à l'excès de tout ce qui sentoit l'imitation, il abandonna son imagination à elle-même. Né pour être original, il a voulu l'être, et remplir une tâche qui lui fut propre. Quittant les routes ordinaires, c'est au milieu des tombeaux qu'il est allé bâtir le monument de son immortalité. C'étoit le placer dans des lieux où il avoit le moins à craindre de se voir suivi par des rivaux. Mais quand le même goût et la même douleur y entraîneroient

d'autres, ils verroient bientôt, que s'il est aisé d'y bâtir avec plus de régularité, il ne l'est pas d'atteindre à la même hauteur. Le poème des Nuits ou Complaintes, présente des défauts nombreux qu'il est presque aussi facile d'éviter que d'apercevoir; mais ce n'en est pas moins la plus sublime élégie qui ait jamais été faite sur les misères de la condition humaine, et le plus hardi monument où les grandes beautés de la poésie brillent unies aux grandes vérités de la morale et de la religion. Il est impossible de lire cet ouvrage, unique dans son genre, sans désirer de connoître plus particulièrement le caractère et les principaux détails de la vie d'un homme si singulier pour ceux mêmes que leur goût porte à la retraite, à plus forte raison pour les lecteurs ordinaires et ceux qui passent leur vie sans réfléchir."

After this introduction, which in spite of its grandiloquent expressions wins the interest and indulgence of the reader by its tone of sincerity and appreciation, Le Tourneur proceeds to give a fairly correct outline of Young's life. The material for this biographical sketch was drawn from an article on Young in the *Monthly Review*¹

¹ *Monthly Review*, 1767, pp. 40-46.

for 1767, which was reprinted from one in the *Biographia Britannica*¹ of the previous year. This account of the life of Young is very characteristic of Le Tourneur's treatment of material which he found ready to his hand. Unlike a great genius, he does not assimilate and fuse it in the white heat of his own invention until it emerges from his mind again in a new and different form. Neither does he translate carefully and accurately with that scrupulous regard for the text which is one of the articles of faith in modern scholarship. He does indeed follow closely his English original as to general plan and outline. Sometimes he translates almost word for word, many times he paraphrases a sentence or omits a phrase, and continually he adds little touches of his own, apparently for the sake of embellishing the original. A single example will make this clear :

“ Previous to his decease,” says the *Monthly Review*, “ he ordered all his Ms. to be com-

¹ *Biographia Britannica*, 1766, Vol. VI. Part II. Appendix. Le Tourneur probably had access to both sources of information, for he gives the occasion of the composition of “The Resignation,” which is omitted in the *Monthly Review*. He may have seen also the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for 1766, which contains the same article with corrections.

mitted to the flames. Those who knew how much he expressed in a small compass, and that he never wrote on trivial subjects, will perhaps lament both the modesty and irreparable loss to posterity."

From Le Tourneur the reader may be surprised and interested to learn that:

"Ce ne fut pas pour se venger de l'oubli des hommes, mais par l'indifférence qu'un mourant doit sentir pour leur estime, qu'Young fit jeter au feu tous ses manuscrits lorsqu'il vit sa mort décidée."

This adorning of the raw material was evidently intended to make Young stand forth in the most favorable light, and the enthusiastic Le Tourneur seems to believe himself gifted with the power of penetrating the inmost recesses of his hero's heart, for he makes absolute statements like the above, and reveals secret motives which he could have had no means of knowing, with an assurance and implicit faith in his own statements which is almost convincing from its very audacity. This method of procedure is characteristic, to a greater or less extent, of all Le Tourneur's work as a translator, and the personal equation must be reckoned as a very im-

portant factor in any judgment of him. Every author whose works he undertakes to translate is to him a hero, a newly discovered friend to admire and revere, to be presented with all possible heralding of virtues to a public waiting eagerly for the honor of an introduction. So, in this life of Edward Young, Le Tourneur is, throughout, delightfully and refreshingly enthusiastic, and the gloomy, discontented Englishman is presented in the guise of a hero and a saint, with all the power of Le Tourneur's bombastic periods. He compares him to Pascal, in energy and depth, and declares that their ideas are of the same order.¹

All this enthusiasm, however, does not blind him to the faults of the *Night Thoughts*, which he discusses at length both in regard to their beauties and their defects. They were written, he says, at haphazard. Young noted down his thoughts and impressions just as they came to him without troubling himself to avoid repetition or to bring order out of chaos. Never-

¹ "Pascal est celui de nos auteurs dont le génie me paroît avoir eu le plus de rapport avec celui d'Young pour l'énergie, la profondeur, les idées du même ordre et le même tour d'imagination."

theless, this poem has great beauties, and here Le Tourneur becomes lost in admiration for the space of several paragraphs. Suddenly, however, he pulls himself up short, soliloquizing aloud for the benefit of the reader:

“Comme je n'ai pas acquis le droit d'avoir pour les miens (lecteurs) cette espèce d'insouciance, il est tems que je finisse des réflexions qu'ils feront très bien sans moi, pour les prévenir sur les libertés que j'ai prises sur cette traduction. Ce sont les défauts que j'ai cru remarquer dans l'ouvrage qui m'y ont autorisé.”

The first of these defects is that of repetition, often useless and wearisome. All such passages Le Tourneur omits from his translation, together with all irrelevant matter which seems to him bizarre, trivial, or poor, and lines treating only of theology and the doctrine of revelation; but he honorably prints them in the form of *notes*, at the end of each *Nuit*, so that nothing shall be really lost. His first “liberty,” then, is the omission of certain passages. For this he has an excellent excuse:

“Mon intention a été de tirer de l'Young anglois, un Young françois, qui pût plaire à ma nation et qu'on pût lire avec intérêt sans songer

s'il est original ou copie. Il me semble que c'est la méthode qu'on devroit suivre en traduisant les auteurs des langues étrangères, qui, avec un mérite supérieur, ne sont pas des modèles de goût. Par là, tout ce qu'il y a de bon chez nos voisins nous deviendroit propre, et nous laisserions le mauvais que nous n'avons aucun besoin de lire ni de connoître. Ce n'est cependant point l'extrait ni l'*esprit* d'Young, mais la traduction entière des *Nuits* que je donne ici."

The reader who may begin to wonder at this point what Le Tourneur's idea of a complete translation is, has only to listen patiently and, if he be a modern scholar, with as much tolerance as in him lies. The second defect is lack of order. This is a fault so serious that Le Tourneur cannot hope to remedy it entirely; he will at least do his best to diminish it. Young, he complains, did not make of each *Night* a unit. One subject is not consistently developed in each division of the poem, but is often touched upon in one place, taken up again in another, and sometimes distributed over the whole nine *Nights*. Such dissipation of ideas, although very natural to one writ-

ing in an ecstacy of grief, is abhorrent to the logical and order-loving mind of the French translator. It is fatal to the interest of the work, where attention is apt to flag because of the very seriousness of the subject. Furthermore, it destroys in each *Night* the charm of variety, the first source of which lies in the novelty of the subjects presented. In short, such disorder in the arrangement of ideas is a piece of carelessness on the part of the English poet, which he would undoubtedly have remedied if he had had the requisite calm and leisure. Le Tourneur, who generously judges him, not upon what he did, but upon what he might have done, will make the correction for him. His first liberty with his text is omission, his second is rearrangement.

“J’ai donc regardé cette première traduction,” he says, “comme un architecte feroit l’amas des matériaux d’un édifice, taillés et tout prêts à placer, mais entassés, au hasard dans huit ou neuf places différentes et mêlés dans les décombres. J’ai assemblé, assorti de mon mieux, sous un titre commun, tous les fragmens qui pourroient s’y rapporter et former une espèce d’ensemble. La même raison m’a fait multiplier

ces titres, et des neuf Nuits de l'original, j'en ai formé vingt-quatre."

The nine *Night Thoughts* of Edward Young transformed into twenty-four *Nuits*! Such a "bouleversement" of the original text might well fill even the audacious Le Tourneur with dismay. But he has only one fear, that of possibly having interfered with the "sublime disorder of grief and genius." He is reassured, however, by the firm conviction that he has done well.¹

The astonished reader, who may well be asking what sort of a *translation* is to be expected from one who takes such unprecedented liberties with his author, may also be reassured. Le Tourneur is nothing if not conscientious, and he will explain his method with the greatest care.

"Au reste, j'ai tâché de traduire aussi littéralement que j'ai pu, à raison de mon talent et de la différence du génie des deux langues." So far, so good, and the critic breathes a sigh of relief. But there is more to follow. "Quand

¹ "Je me flatte de n'avoir pas profané ces élans de l'enthousiasme, ces mouvements de l'âme, cette succession rapide et tumultueuse des transports d'une âme agitée qui s'élançait et bondit d'idées en idées, de sentimens en sentimens."

il m'est venu quelque idée qui pourroit servir de liaison aux autres, quelque épithète qui complétoit une image, la rendoit plus lumineuse, ou donnoit plus d'harmonie au style, j'ai cru que c'étoit mon droit de l'employer. S'il étoit vrai que j'eusse quelquefois embellি l'original, ce seroit une bonne fortune dont je lui rends tout l'honneur. Je ne la devrois qu'au sentiment dont il me pénéstroit. Quand notre langue résistoit à l'expression angloise, j'ai traduit l'idée; et quand l'idée conservoit encore un air trop étranger aux nôtres, j'ai traduit le sentiment. Pour me faire mieux entendre, j'en citerai un exemple. A la fin des notes de la quatrième Nuit, on lit: ‘Le souvenir de la mort de Narcisse fait rebrousser les pensées les plus joyeuses de l'âge le plus gai droit à la vallée des morts.’¹ Voilà le mot à mot de l'anglois. Laissant cette idée trop sauvage pour nous, j'y ai substitué l'idée qu'elle faisoit naître. ‘Le jeune homme, dans la fougue de l'âge et des plaisirs, suspendra sa joie pour s'attendrir sur ton sort; il ira mélancolique et pensif rêver à toi au milieu des tombeaux.’”

¹ “ And turn the gayest thought of gayest age
Down their right channel, through the vale of death.”

From all this it will be readily seen that no complete and accurate translation of the *Night Thoughts* of Edward Young is to be expected. Le Tourneur's work, indeed, can hardly be called a translation at all, in the modern acceptation of the word. It is, rather, a very skilful and ingenious arrangement and adaptation, an interpretation rather than a translation. It has seemed worth while to dwell thus at length and in detail upon this Introduction, for it not only reveals clearly and exactly Le Tourneur's individual methods of literary work, but also expresses the general eighteenth-century ideal of what a scholarly translation should be.¹ It is clear, too, that the *Nuits d'Young* cannot be judged by the standard of an ordinary modern translation, but must be considered as a *genre* quite apart, and a different criterion of criticism should accordingly be applied to it.

To the student of the *Nuits*, who strives to discover from which of Young's *Nights* Le Tourneur gathered the material for any one of his *Nuits*, it seems that the labor of the self-styled

¹ Cf. D'Alembert, *Mélanges de Littérature, d'Histoire et de Philosophie*, Amsterdam, 1769, Vol. III. Observations sur l'art de traduire en général, etc.

translator must have been endless. In the whole twenty-four, only one title is identical with one of Young's nine, *Narcisse*,¹ and the immense task of going through the English poem and picking out here and there, lines on friendship, on immortality, etc., to form separate essays, which are then to be welded into one harmonious and connected whole, makes the reader fairly gasp with amazement at the infinite patience and time required for such a labor. The work is, besides, more than a mere editing of selections chosen for their continuity or appropriateness. Interwoven in the very

¹ Young's nine *Nights* are as follows : (1) On Life, Death, and Immortality. (2) On Time, Death, and Friendship. (3) Narcissa. (4) The Christian Triumph. (5) (6) and (7) The Infidel Reclaimed. (8) Virtue's Apology. (9) The Consolation.

Le Tourneur's subjects include: (1) Misères de l'Humanité. (2) L'Amitié. (3) Le Temps. (4) Narcisse. (5) Le Remède contre la Crainte de la Mort. (6) L'Oubli de la Mort. (7) Le Caractère de la Mort. (8) (9) (10) L'Immortalité. (11) L'Anéantissement. (12) Les Avantages de la Nuit et de la Solitude. (13) La Tristesse et le Malheur. (14) Grandeur de l'Âme. (15) Le Monde. (16) Le Plaisir et le Suicide. (17) Le Bel Esprit. (18) La Conscience. (19) La Vertu. (20) L'Existence de Dieu et des Esprits. (21) Pluralité des Mondes. (22) Vue morale des Cieux. (23) Hymne à l'Éternel. (24) La Consolation.

warp and woof of the whole fabric are Le Tourneur's own thoughts and ideas, so inextricably tangled in the meshes of Young's sentiments as to be often almost indistinguishable from them. He seems to have been so familiar with the English author, so imbued with his thought and so filled with his spirit, that he caught the very essence of his inspiration and spoke his language as easily as his own. He gives often not even a paraphrase, but an echo, a thought of his own suggested by Young. It is, indeed, no longer Edward Young the English poet, whom Le Tourneur presents, but a "Young français" who did, as his translator hoped, find a place for himself in the literature of France.

Considered, then, as an interpreter, an imitator, a critical editor of Young, and recognizing what he aimed to do—to omit irrelevant and uninteresting passages, to avoid repetition, to make an orderly arrangement in twenty-four divisions of the thoughts scattered throughout Young's nine *Nights*, to translate literally wherever possible, to embellish or paraphrase the original at will,—in short, to introduce a French Young, acceptable to the waiting

public,—in view of all this, it must be granted that Le Tourneur did his work faithfully and well.

The work, on the whole, shows a good deal of originality, skill, and literary discrimination. The general effect is good, the arrangement clear, the development logical, and the style agreeable; and many a modern reader will readily understand why the French in general found the *Young Français* superior to the original. Young's fine lines and passages of really good poetry are, of course, lost in Le Tourneur's rendering, but so are the dreary stretches of rhetoric and the arid wastes of repetition. On the other hand, something is gained by the logical development of Le Tourneur's arrangement, and the charm of a clear and quaintly grandiloquent prose. One or two examples will enable the reader to judge for himself. Take first the famous description of Night:

“Night! sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumb'ring world.
Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
Nor eye nor listening ear an object finds.
Creation sleeps! 'Tis as the general pulse

Of life stood still, and Nature made a pause;
 An awful pause ! prophetic of her end.
 And let her prophecy be soon fulfill'd ;
 Fate ! drop the curtain : I can lose no more.”¹

“ Maintenant arrivée au milieu de son cercle, assise au haut des airs sur son trône d'ébène, la nuit, comme un Dieu dans une majesté voilée et sans rayons, étend son sceptre de plomb sur un monde assoupi. Quel silence absolu ! quelle obscurité profonde ! L'œil ne voit aucun objet, l'oreille n'entend aucun son. Toute la création dort, tout paraît mort. Il semble que le mouvement qui donne la vie à l'univers se soit arrêté et que la nature fasse une pause. Repos terrible, image prophétique de la fin du monde ! Qu'elle ne tarde plus ! Destin, hâte-toi de tirer le rideau ; je ne peux plus perdre.”

Compare with this the still more celebrated apostrophe to Death :

“ Death ! great proprietor of all ! 'tis thine
 To tread out empire, and to quench the stars.
 The sun himself by thy permission shines ;
 And one day thou shalt pluck him from his sphere.
 Amid such mighty plunder, why exhaust
 Thy partial quiver on a mark so mean ?
 Why thy peculiar rancour wreak'd on me ? ”²

¹ Works of Edward Young, London, 1765. *Night I.*

² *Night I.*

"O Mort! souverain propriétaire de tous les êtres, il t'appartient d'effacer les empires sous tes pas et d'éteindre les astres. Le soleil lui-même, tu ne dois le souffrir qu'un tems, dans l'univers; un jour viendra que ton bras le détrônant de sa sphère, le précipitera dans la nuit. Ne peux-tu donc te contenter de ces grandes victimes? Pourquoi ta haine s'attache-t-elle à un atome et me choisit-elle pour s'épuiser sur moi?"

These two examples represent very fairly the kind of work Le Tourneur did as a translator. Some of the lines are quite carefully and literally rendered, so that it seems as if he could be exact enough when he chose. Fortunately or unfortunately, he never chose for any length of time. Even when he pretended to be most exact, he seemed unable to resist the temptation to embroider his original, to add an epithet, to translate a word by a phrase, to expand or to condense. Nevertheless, this method of dealing with a text was highly approved, not only in France, but in England;¹ and Le Tourneur, no less than his

¹ "Such of our readers as are well acquainted with the genius of the French language must be very sensible of the difficulty of M. Le Tourneur's undertaking, which he has executed, however, with great ability. He appears to be a

Young Français, was received with the greatest enthusiasm

In addition to the *Night Thoughts* these two volumes contained the *Épitre à Voltaire*, *The Last Judgment*, the *Paraphrase of Part of the Book of Job*, a *Revue de la Vie*, *Pensées sur Divers Sujets*, *Eusebe*, and an extract from *The Resignation*, all of the latter poem, in fact, which was not "entirely unworthy of being translated." Here the same method of analysis and synthesis in composition is employed. The *Épitre à Voltaire* is merely a paraphrase of eight of the nine verses composing the *Dedication to M. Voltaire*, which preceded the *Sea Piece* of 1733. The reader of this mediocre selection will be repaid by one amusing mistake of the translator, who innocently renders *Dorset downs* by *le duvet de Dorset!*

man of genius, sound judgment, and good taste; there is something, too, in his turn of thought and in the boldness and energy of his style that renders him peculiarly qualified for such a task as that of translating Dr. Young.

"What gives frequent disgust to every reader of taste, in the *Night Thoughts*, is the turning and twisting of the same sentiment into a thousand different shapes. The translator, very judiciously, has taken great liberty with his author in this respect." — *Monthly Review*, 1769, Vol. XLI. p. 562.

The fifth letter in *The Centaur not Fabulous* furnishes the material for the *Revue de la Vie* and *Pensées sur Divers Sujets*, while *Eusèbe, ou le Riche Vertueux* was composed from the third letter.

The translation of the *Last Judgment* is a more faithful rendering of the text than that of the *Night Thoughts*. Le Tourneur contents himself with suppressing a few sentences here and there, and omitting entirely the long paragraph which concludes the third book, and which seems to him an anti-climax after the preceding picture of universal conflagration. The same feeling of dramatic fitness probably prompted him to transfer Job's short and humble interruptions of the Lord's questions, to the end of the *Paraphrase*. Otherwise the English is followed quite closely, though Young's fine bravado, especially in the famous description of the war-horse, is quite attenuated in Le Tourneur's elegant and stately prose.¹

¹ "Survey the warlike horse : didst thou invest
With thunder his robust distended chest ?
No sense of fear his dauntless soul allays :
'Tis dreadful to behold his nostrils blaze :
To paw the vale he proudly takes delight
· And triumphs in the fulness of his might.

Encouraged by the phenomenal success of the *Nuits*, Le Tourneur hastened to continue the work, and in 1770 published the *Oeuvres Diverses*¹ in two volumes. They contained: *Estimation de la Vie*, *Traité des Passions*, *Lettres Morales sur le Plaisir*, and *Conjectures sur la Composition Originale*, together with the *Épitre à Lord Lansdowne* and the tragedies of *Busiris* and *La Vengeance*. The long and interesting Preface contained a defense of the poetry of the school of melancholy and a promise on Le Tourneur's part soon to abandon "cemeteries and their mournful yew trees" and to choose works of a more cheer-

High raised, he snuffs the battle from afar,
And burns to plunge amid the raging war :
And mocks at death, and throws his foam around
And in a storm of fury shakes the ground."

— *Paraphrase of Part of the Book of Job*, 259-269.

"Voir le cheval guerrier. As-tu tendu ses muscles, ses flancs robustes ? Son âme indomptable ne connaît point la crainte. Voir le feu jaillir de ses narines fumantes ; il se plaît à frapper la terre de son pied superbe, et se réjouit de sa force. La tête levée, il appelle par ses hennissements les combats éloignés, et brûle de se précipiter au milieu du carnage. Il se rit du trépas, couvre son mors d'écume, et dans les transports furieux, il enfonce la terre."

¹ *Oeuvres Diverses du Docteur Young*, traduites de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur. Paris, 1770, 2 vols. in 8vo (priv. 26 juillet).

ful character, unless, he adds naïvely, "chance should offer me some one very sublime and very melancholy who might make the breaking of my promise pardonable." At this point he takes advantage of the opportunity to mention his proposed translation of Shakespeare which he is ready to undertake if he can be assured of its favorable reception by the public.

It is interesting to note here that the idea of a scrupulously exact and accurate translation was growing upon Le Tourneur as a desirable possibility, though he never, in his most careful moments, succeeded in living up to it. He is aware, for example, that the omission of seven or eight pages from the *Conjectures sur la Composition Originale* would be a decided improvement. Nevertheless, he proposes to translate the entire essay, both because he has a sort of respect for the last work of an old man, and because, by seeing all its beauties and defects, the reader will be better enabled to appreciate Young's remarkable imagination. In the case of the tragedies, too, he intends to be strictly literal,¹ and this is his

¹ "On a la traduction littérale de ses deux pièces. J'ai tâché de représenter partout dans notre langue la même idée

excuse for repeating part of the work of La Place.¹

On the whole, Le Tourneur fulfilled his promise to be literal with considerable fidelity, perhaps with as much as lay within his power.²

le même sentiment, la même image, le même tour, le même arrangement et toutes ces nuances qu'on n'altère point sans altérer le tout. . . . On perd dans ma prose quantité de beaux vers répandus dans les Scènes que M. de la Place avoit ornées de rimes. Mais on y voit mieux l'original, on y entend les personnages, leurs vrais sentimens, de quelle manière et dans quel ordre ils les ont exprimés."

¹ *Le Théâtre Anglois*, Paris, 1745.

² "This vast and solid earth, that blazing sun,
Those skies through which it rolls, must all have end.
What then, is man ? the smallest part of nothing.
Day buries day ; month, month ; and year, the year.
Our life is but a chain of many deaths.
Can then, Death's self be feared ? Our life much rather.
Life is the desert, life the solitude ;
Death joins us to the great majority ;
'Tis to be born to Platos and to Cæsar,
'Tis to be great for ever ;
'Tis pleasure, 'tis ambition then, to die."

— *The Revenge*, Act IV. Scene 4.

"Cette terre si vaste et si solide, ce Soleil éclatant, ce firmament au travers duquel il roule, tous ces grands êtres doivent finir. Qu'est-ce donc que l'homme ? La plus frêle parcelle du néant. Un jour succède à l'autre, le mois remplace le mois, l'année engloutit l'année ; notre vie n'est qu'une chaîne continue de mille morts. Qu'a donc la mort en elle-même de redoutable ? C'est la vie qui est bien plus à

The only important changes he made in the text were conscientiously noted in the Preface. He shortened Young's long *True Estimation of Human Life* by making a separate division of the description of the passions under the title *Traité des Passions*, to which he adds, as introduction, the preface to the whole essay. The *Lettres Morales* consist of those portions of the first four letters of *The Centaur not Fabulous*, not already used in the manufacture of *Eusèbe* and dovetailed skilfully together. With the exception of these changes, his prose rendering is generally accurate as to sense, if it does not always follow the word. The translator simply reserves to himself the inalienable right to omit a word here, soften a phrase there, add an occasional adjective or adverb.

Edward Young and his interpreter, Pierre Le Tourneur, were received in France with the greatest enthusiasm. By September, 1769, the third edition¹ of their work appeared, and there

craindre. C'est la vie, c'est ce monde qui est un désert, une vraie solitude, la mort nous réunit à la foule nombreuse du genre humain. Mourir, c'est renaitre au milieu des Platons et des Césars : c'est épouser une grandeur éternelle, mourir est donc un plaisir, une gloire digne de notre ambition."

¹ *Mercure de France*, September, 1769.

were fifteen within the next six years. They took Paris by storm and captivated almost the entire reading public.

“Monsieur Le Tourneur marche toujours à côté de son modèle lorsqu'il s'élève,” says Fréron, in the *Année Littéraire*, “le corrige lorsqu'il s'étend dans des lieux communs ou des répétitions, substitue des idées et des images à celles qui ne peuvent être traduites ou qui n'auroient aucune grâce dans notre langue.”¹

La Harpe, in a letter to M. de la Borde, published in the *Mercure*, did not consider Young a great poet, but had only praise for his interpreter.

“Quoiqu'il en soit, Monsieur, je suis charmé que cet ouvrage ait commencé la réputation que M. Le Tourneur paroît devoir acquérir un jour. Il admire beaucoup Young, mais je suis persuadé qu'il fera mieux que lui. Corneille admireroit Lucain, et il l'a bien surpassé. . . . Il conserve toujours la couleur de son original, même en changeant quelquefois son dessein . . . quand il prend la place d'Young, il est au moins son égal.”²

¹ *Année Littéraire*, November, 1769.

² *Mercure de France*, September, 1769.

Voltaire, who, less than ten years later, was to wage relentless war upon Le Tourneur, wrote him cordially from Ferney, June 7, 1769 : "Il me semble que le Traducteur a plus de goût que l'auteur. Vous avez mis autant d'ordre que vous avez pu dans ce ramas de lieux communs, ampoulés et obscurs."

Grimm, one of the few to protest against the gloom of the English poet, was roundly taken to task by Diderot :

"Monsieur le maître de la boutique du Houx toujours vert, vous rétractez-vous quelquefois ? Eh bien ! en voici une belle occasion. Dites, s'il vous plaît, à toutes vos augustes pratiques, que c'est très mal à propos que vous avez attribué l'incognito à la traduction des Nuits d'Young par M. Le Tourneur. Dites, sur ma parole, que cette traduction, pleine d'harmonie et de la plus grande richesse d'expression, une des plus difficiles à faire en toute langue, est une des mieux faites dans la nôtre. L'édition en a été épuisée en quatre mois, et l'on travaille à la seconde ; dites encore cela, car cela est vrai. Ajoutez qu'elle a été lue par nos petits-maîtres et nos petites-maîtresses, et que ce n'est pas sans un mérite rare qu'on

fait lire des jérémiaades à un peuple frivole et gai.”¹

A complete change seemed to have taken place in literary taste. The *Young Français* became the fashion of the hour. Editions of Le Tourneur multiplied with astonishing rapidity, and his translation was reprinted as late as 1842.² Imitators and other translators followed quickly in Le Tourneur’s footsteps; *Les Nuits Parisiennes*, *Les Nuits Angloises*, and finally a parody, *Les Jours*,³ testified to the widespread popularity of the work. Still it was Le Tourneur and his method of interpretation that received the lion’s share of praise;⁴ his work remained the standard

¹ *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, par Grimm, Diderot, etc., ed. Tourneux, Paris, 1879, Vol. IX. p. 46.

² *Christian*, Paris, 1842. *Les Nuits d’ Young*, suivies des Tombeaux d’Hervey. Traduction de P. Le Tourneur, revue, et précédée d’un Essai sur le Jobisme.

³ *Les Jours, pour servir de correctif et de supplément aux Nuits d’ Young*, par un Mousquetaire Noir, Paris, 1770.

⁴ “*Les Nuits* de M. Le Tourneur ont sans doute le mérite incontestable d’être bien écrites et de surpasser même quelquefois l’original. S’il ne peut plus être regardé comme le traducteur fidèle de cet ouvrage, un titre plus distingué lui appartient.” — *Satyres d’ Young, ou, l’Amour de la Renommée, passion universelle*. Traductions libres de l’Anglois, par M. Bertin, Paris, 1767.

translation of the English poet and the medium through which he was known to France.

It is easy to find fault with Le Tourneur's work as a translation and to criticize it with exceeding severity. The modern scholar, accustomed to methods of accuracy, exactness, and a scrupulous fidelity to the text, is tempted to accuse him of lack of initiative and literary frankness, and to inquire scornfully why he did not edit such portions of Young as might have seemed suitable, instead of thus refashioning him. It is possible, however, that Le Tourneur was neither so dull nor so timid as he may appear from the distant viewpoint of the twentieth century; it is possible, moreover, that, living in the eighteenth century, he was better able to appreciate its needs and desires than we, with all the accumulated knowledge of more than a hundred years; that he was keen-sighted enough to realize the literary situation, and bold enough to introduce as great an innovation as was possible to a nation conservative in temperament,

"Le traducteur ajouta, retrancha, embellit l'œuvre de son auteur et grâce à cette trop rare infidélité, la copie de ce lugubre et énergique tableau fut préférée à l'original."—*Montpellier, Tableau historique et descriptif, etc., par E. Thomas, Montpellier, 1853, p. 154.*

taste, and training. Whether Young, in his own original form, would have been appreciated or even received in France, must ever remain an open question.

But however Le Tourneur's interpretation of Young may be regarded for its intrinsic value, it marks an important point in the history of literature. To Le Tourneur belongs the honor of introducing Young to France. His translation became a classic of the poetry of melancholy, and through his interpretation the English poet exercised a considerable influence upon French literature. It was the favorite reading of Robespierre; Camille Desmoulins read it the evening before his death, thereby bringing upon himself Westermann's pleasantry, "Tu veux donc mourir deux fois?"¹ Mme. de Staël knew and appreciated Young, and there are echoes of his philosophic melancholy in *Corinne* and her tragedy, *Jane Gray*, and later, Chateaubriand showed the same influence in *René* and *Atala*. But with the nineteenth century came the inevitable reaction from a surfeit of melancholy, and with the single exception of Lamartine, several of

¹ J. Texte, *J.-J. Rousseau et les Origines du Cosmopolitisme Littéraire*, Paris, 1895, p. 381.

whose *Méditations* bear witness to a profound study of the *Night Thoughts*, Young was less and less read, until he became merely a name.¹

The influence of Le Tourneur's *Young Français* was not confined to France. It was translated into Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. In Italy, the *Sepolchri* of Ugo Foscolo, the poetry of Pindemonte and Leopardi are striking examples of the strength and persistence of Young's personality, seen through translations of a translation. In Germany, meantime, Young had become known as early as 1751 by the admirable and scholarly translations of Ebert, and the poet himself had created as great a sensation as in France, but without the necessary mediation of change of dress and speech.²

Young, however, was not the only poet of melancholy who entered France. The keen-sighted Le Tourneur, seeing that a delight in sadness was rapidly and easily acquired by the public, hastened to gratify this new taste, and in 1770, while the literary world was still

¹ For the influence of Young in France and Italy, see *Le Poète Edward Young*, par W. Thomas, Paris, 1901; also J. Texte, *Rousseau et le Cosmopolitisme Littéraire*, Paris, 1895.

² For Young in Germany see *Thomas*, and also *Edward Young in Germany*, by John Kind, New York, 1906.

at a white heat of enthusiasm over the *Night Thoughts*, brought out the translation of another work of a somewhat similar character, Hervey's *Meditations on the Tombs*.¹ This was a religious work in two volumes (1747) : the first containing the *Meditations and Contemplations among the Tombs, Reflections on a Flower Garden*, and *A Discant on Creation*; the second, *Contemplations on the Night, Contemplations on the Starry Heavens*, and *A Winter Piece*. Hervey² was a great admirer and imitator of Young, and his writings are full of the same melancholy reflections upon death and the life to come, but his grief is not so poignant and his sadness is more gentle. His life, like his character, was simple, unaffected, unselfish; his *Meditations* are artificial, complex, self-conscious essays, in which a vast number of truisms are set forth in stilted phrases, thickly interspersed with quotations from the Bible and from Young's *Night Thoughts*. If Hervey had been content to write as simply as he talked

¹ *Méditations d'Hervey*, traduites de l'Anglois, par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1770.

² James Hervey (1721-1775). His best-known work is *Dialogues between Theron and Aspasia* (1755), which drew down on him the wrath of John Wesley.

and lived, many of his descriptions would be pleasant reading ; but he had, at least, the merit of a sincere love for nature, which was sufficiently rare in the artificial eighteenth century.

Le Tourneur, who in gentleness and serious unaffectedness of character was akin to Hervey, gives a detailed and sympathetic account of the life of the English curate in the preface to the *Méditations*, the materials for which he drew largely from Hervey's *Letters*. He is so impressed with the beauty and simplicity of Hervey's life that he wishes it to become known to the curates of his own country as an example worthy of imitation. It is for them especially that he has made this translation, and, therefore, for their edification he has retained details which he would otherwise have omitted. Here Le Tourneur pauses to make a confession. When he first opened the *Meditations*, he says, and saw that they had already reached the fifteenth edition, he believed that he had found a masterpiece of literature that would prove to surpass even the *Night Thoughts* of Young, which, at the time of his translation, had reached only the fourth. But he was doomed to disappointment. "Je reconnus,"

he says naïvely, "que le grand nombre des éditions est encore une règle bien incertaine pour apprécier le mérite réel d'un Ouvrage, et qu'il est mille hasards dans la réputation et les succès."

Nevertheless, after the first shock of surprise at finding only an imitator where he had looked for an original genius, he takes fresh courage. He realizes that his author has, after all, imagination, feeling, and energy.¹

In the matter of translation, Le Tourneur pursues much the same method as in his interpretation of Young. He greatly abridges the *Meditations*, omitting passages directly imitated from the *Night Thoughts*, and those of a purely devout nature, as well as most of the quotations and paraphrases of the Bible. Why reprint, he asks, a number of commonplace statements which have already been uttered in a more pleasing manner by Young? As for the Bible passages, he says proudly, "Nous possédons chez nous assez de livres édifiants et pieux, sans avoir besoin d'en emprunter des

1 "Ses Tombeaux respirent une sensibilité douce qui vous pénètre et vous attendrit par degrés. De tems en tems il lui échappe des moments et des traits sublimes."

Nations Protestantes, et si l’Ouvrage n’eût eu que ce mérite, il n’eût pas rempli mon objet. . . . Il faut souvent rendre aux Anglois le service de châtier leur abondance : les pertes les enrichissent et la traduction devient souvent pour leurs Ouvrages un miroir qui recueille et concentre dans un foyer brûlant mille traits de lumière qui, auparavant dispersés et enveloppés de nuages, restoient sans chaleur et sans effet.” Thus fortified in his method by the above excellent reasons, Le Tourneur is about to advance to the translation, but pauses again, unable to resist a final remark of self-justification. He fears that, perhaps, after all, persons of a very scrupulous taste may think that he has not been severe enough in his omissions. To these, if there be any such, he replies generously, “je ne devois pas non plus détruire le plan de l’original et anéantir *en entier* des réflexions qui sont le but principal de l’auteur, et qui dans la suite de ses tableaux peuvent servir de liaisons ou de repos.”

The *Meditations among the Tombs* are said to have been inspired by a journey made by Hervey to Kilkhampton from Bideford, while he was curate there. The scene, however, is laid

in Cornwall, this change having been made, says Hervey, in order "that Imagination might operate more freely and the Improvement of the Reader be consulted without anything that should look like a variation from Truth and Fact."¹ Detained for some hours in a country village, the author went for a walk, in the course of which he passed by the church. "The doors, like the Heaven to which they lead, were wide open, and readily admitted an unworthy Stranger. Pleased with the Opportunity, I resolved to spend a few minutes under the sacred Roof. In a situation so retired and awful, I could not resist falling into a Train of Meditations *serious* and *mournfully pleasing.*" Then, as Hervey moves from tomb to tomb upon the "lettered floor," he gives expression to the thoughts that come to him, on death, the uncertainty of human life, the state of the righteous and the wicked, etc., which he embodies in the form of a letter to a lady. The first tomb to attract his attention is that of an infant, and his reflections thereupon and Le Tourneur's rendering are very characteristic of both authors.

¹ *Meditations and Contemplations*, by James Hervey, 15th edition, London, 1759, 2 vols.

“Yonder *white stone*, Emblem of the Innocence it covers, informs the Beholder of One, who breath’d out its tender Soul, almost in the instant of receiving it. . . . There, the peaceful *Infant*, without so much as knowing what Labour and Vexation mean, ‘lies still and is quiet, it sleeps and is at Rest.’¹ Staying only to wash away its native impurity in the Laver of Regeneration, it bid a speedy Adieu to Time and Terrestrial Things. . . . What did the little hasty Sojourner find, so forbidding and disgustful in our upper World, to occasion its precipitant exit? . . . And did our new-come Stranger begin to *sip* the cup of Life; but perceiving the bitterness, turn away its Head, and refuse the *Draught*? Was this the cause, why the wary Babe only opened its Eyes, just looked on the Light, and then withdrew into the more inviting regions of undisturbed Repose?

“Happy Voyager! No sooner launched than arrived at the Haven! But more eminently happy they who have passed the Waves, and weathered all the storms, of a troublesome and dangerous World! Who, through many tribulations, have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven;

¹ Job iii. 13.

and thereby brought Honour to their Divine Convoy, administered comfort to the Companions of their Toil, and left an instructive Example to succeeding Pilgrims.”¹

“ Mais quel est celui que couvre cette pierre dont la blancheur pure paroît être l’emblème de l’innocence ? Approchons. . . . C’est un enfant qui reçut et rendit presque au même instant son âme tendre et fugitive. Il n’a point connu la peine et la douleur ; il ne s’est arrêté qu’un moment aux portes de la vie, pour laver sa tache originelle, et aussitôt il a dit un adieu rapide au tems et à la terre, et s’est élancé du berceau dans la tombe. Qu’a-t-il donc entrevu dans notre monde de si rebutant et de si insupportable, pour en sortir si brusquement ? Seroit-ce que ce jeune étranger, lorsqu’il goûta la vie, trouva la coupe trop amère, et détournant la tête, refusa d’en boire davantage ? Dégoûté par ce premier essai, il aura fui du monde pour se sauver dans la paix du tombeau qui lui sembla plus douce et plus tranquille.

“ Heureux et rapide passager, à peine tu quittas le rivage, que tu te vis entrer dans le port ! Plus que toi, pourtant, ils méritent d’être heu-

¹ Hervey, *Meditations*, London, 1759, p. 15.

reux, ceux qui ont surmonté les flots et les tempêtes d'un long et dangereux trajet, qui ont soulagé dans la route les compagnons de leurs travaux et laissé l'exemple de leur courage aux voyageurs qui les suivent.”¹

Besides the *Meditations*, this volume contained three of Hervey's *Letters* and a prose translation of Gray's *Elegy*. Le Tourneur adds in a note that he inserts it because it seems to him written with “taste, force, and harmony,” in addition to which its subject is analogous to the one he has just been translating. It will perhaps be interesting to observe his degree of success, but the reader accustomed to the harmonious flow of the English lines will hardly recognize them in their colorless and ill-fitting prose dress.

“J'entends le son de la cloche funèbre qui annonce la fin du jour ; les troupeaux mugissans marchent à pas lents, et tortueux vers l'étable ; le laboureur fatigué regagne avec effort sa chaumière, il abandonne l'univers à l'effroi des ténèbres et à l'horreur de mes réflexions.

* * * * *

“Ainsi mille pierres précieuses sont ren-

¹ *Méditations d'Hervey*, traduites par Le Tourneur, Paris, 1770, p. 84.

fermées dans les sombres cavités des montagnes ; mille fleurs naissantes répandent dans les déserts une odeur embaumée."

These stanzas show Le Tourneur in one of his worst moments. Whether he was inaccurate from ignorance or design, it is hard to say. Did he disapprove or misunderstand "a gem of purest ray serene" and was it as a concession to taste that he wrote *précieuses*? Was he trying to correct an error on Gray's part when he wrote *montagnes* instead of *océan*? Did he consider *étable* more elegant than *plaine*? And why did he include "born to blush unseen" in the comprehensive and colorless *naissantes*? To such questions, the answer must remain uncertain. Yet a careful study of Le Tourneur's work as a translator reveals so great a general understanding of English, so much skill in preserving the idea through the medium of paraphrase, so much clearness of judgment in the appreciation of literature, and so much care and conscientiousness in method, that it is difficult to attribute all his inaccuracy to ignorance or carelessness. It seems more probable that as Young "dédaignoit d'avoir du goût," he disdained to be faithful to his text, and in many cases, at least,

deliberately paraphrased for the sake of better suiting his purpose as interpreter of ideas, rather than of words.

The second volume of Hervey's *Meditations*, which contain his reflections upon nature, was translated, not by Le Tourneur, but by Peyron.¹ He had already translated independently the *Meditations in a Flower Garden*, and had given them to the same bookseller who was publishing Le Tourneur's work. Apparently he and Le Tourneur came to an amicable arrangement of collaboration, for Le Tourneur reviewed Peyron's translation and it was published as the second part of his own, with Peyron's name on the title-page.² These meditations, although somewhat more flowery in style, are of the same general character as the

¹ Peyron, Jean François (1748–1784), translator, commissioner of the Colonies, secretary of M. de Bussy, translator of *Nouvelles Lettres persanes* (Lyttleton), 1770; *Le Fourbe* (Congreve), 1775; *L'Homme et la Femme sensibles* (Mackenzie), 1775; *Choix de Lettres de Lord Chesterfield*, 1776; *Jeux de Calliope, Collection de poèmes anglois, italiens, allemands, espagnols*, 1776.

² *Méditations d'Hervey*, traduites par M. Peyron et revues par M. Le Tourneur, Seconde Partie, Paris, 1771.

This volume contains also: *Les funérailles d'Arabert, Religieux de la Trappe, Poème de M. Jerningham*.

others, and differ from them only in revealing a sincere and unaffected love for nature.

The public greeted this new acquisition in the *genre sombre* with appreciative interest, if not with overwhelming enthusiasm. The *Nuits d'Young* still fully satisfied its love for melancholy and it did not find Hervey his superior or his equal. The *Année Littéraire* even went so far as to question Hervey's genius and his taste.¹ The *Avant Coureur*, on the contrary, declared that Hervey had "le sentiment vif, l'imagination ardente, le style noble et sublime."² But however diverse popular feeling might be in regard to the author, it was of one mind concerning the merit of its favorite translator.

"Il est impossible de vivre mieux qu'Hervey, et difficile d'écrire aussi bien que M. Le Tourneur," writes one critic from The Hague,³ and

¹ "Quelquefois même l'Auteur Anglois manque de goût, sa Méditation sur le tombeau d'un enfant en est un exemple . . . on y reconnoit toujours un certain air guindé, de la gêne, un tour pénible, et je ne sais quoi de fatigant qui accable." — *Année Littéraire*, September, 1770.

² *L'Avant Coureur*, Aug. 6, 1770.

³ *Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, La Haye, 1771.

this seems to have been the general consensus of opinion.

Editions of Hervey were frequent, and the *Méditations* were often printed with the works of Young, and formed part of the *Nuits* as late as 1824.¹

Even while France was listening with delight to the melancholy strains of Young and Hervey, another poet from across the sea was playing a still more plaintive and penetrating music, softly as yet, but gradually louder and clearer, till he caught the attentive ear of Le Tourneur, who then heralded his approach with a loud blare of trumpets which almost drowned the slow, deep notes of the *Thoughts* and *Meditations*.

In 1760 James Macpherson published in Edinburgh the first of his so-called translations from the Gaelic poems of Ossian.² They at once crossed the English Channel and in the same year French translations of some of them by Turgot appeared in the *Journal Étranger*.³

¹ *Les Nuits d'Young, suivies des Méditations sur les Tombeaux d'Hervey*, Paris, 1824, 2 vols. in 8vo.

² *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, 1760; *Fingal*, 1762; *Temora and Other Poems of Ossian*, 1763.

³ *Journal Étranger*, September, 1760; *Connal et Cimora, Ryno et Alpin*.

The new kind of literature was well received. "Cela est beau comme Homère," wrote Grimm.¹ Thus encouraged, the *Journal Étranger* continued to print translations from the new poet and during the next two years published parts of *Fingal*, *Lathmore*, *Oithona*, *Dar Thula*, *Conlath*, and *Cuthona*, translated by the Abbé Suard.² In 1760 the Duchesse d'Aiguillon translated *Carthon*.³

Ossian was by this time beginning to attract attention, and now in France, as in England, arose a hot discussion as to his historical identity, which waged in the literary periodicals for several years.⁴ This, together with the impossibility of arriving at any definite decision, naturally increased, rather than diminished, the popularity of Ossian. In 1768 the translations made by Turgot and Suard for the *Journal Étranger*, were collected and

¹ *Correspondance littéraire*, avril, 1762.

² *Journal Étranger*, December, 1761; January, February, April, July, 1762.

³ *Carthon*, poème traduit de l'anglois par Mme. *** Londres, 1762. Cf. also *Mémoires secrets*, Feb. 20, 1762.

⁴ *Journal des Savants*, February, November, 1762; May, June, September, December, 1764; *Gazette littéraire*, 1764, 1765.

published in the latter's *Variétés Littéraires*.¹ Three years later, Le Tourneur brought out two small volumes entitled *Choix de Contes et de Poésies érites*.² The second volume of this work contained, besides a series of English Letters, fourteen short translations, some complete, some extracts, of the poems of Ossian. They are, for the most part, the more lyrical passages, such as the *Description af a Night in October*, *Minvane*, *Lathmon*, etc., which would appeal at once to a public already enjoying the more outspoken melancholy of Young and Hervey. These poems, too, were sad, but with a gentle, mysterious sadness, and they had a delicate beauty of imagination and pastel-like descriptions of nature and human love, which fell gratefully upon ears a trifle wearied, perhaps, by songs of human wretchedness and religious consolation. Hence, this addition to the few translations of Ossian, which were already known, was felt to be a distinct acquisition, and especially was the world of letters glad to welcome anything new from the hand

¹ Suard, *Variétés Littéraires*, Paris, 1768.

² *Choix de Contes et de Poésies érites*, traduits de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1771, 2 vols. in 8vo.

of its favorite interpreter of English literature. The translation was made "avec goût,"¹ which was high praise, and the poetry itself was "simple and sublime."² One of the most admired passages was the apostrophe to the star in *Minona*, which is familiar to modern readers in the poetic rendering of Alfred de Musset.³

"Étoile, compagne de la nuit, dont la tête sort brillante des nuages du couchant, et dont les pas majestueux s'impriment sur l'azur du firmament, que regardes-tu dans la plaine? Les vents orageux du jour se taisent. Le bruit du torrent semble s'être éloigné. Les flots adoucis rampent au pied des rochers. Les moucherons du soir, rapidement portés sur leurs ailes légères, remplissent de leurs bourdonnements le silence des airs. Étoile brillante que regardes-tu dans

¹ *Année Littéraire*, 1772, Vol. III.

² "Les poésies ernes ont de très grandes beautés, des images frappantes, une expression grande et énergique."
— *Journal encyclopédique*, June, 1772.

³ "Pâle étoile du soir, messagère lointaine
Dont le front sort brillant des voiles du couchant,
De ton palais d'azur, au sein du firmament,
Que regardes-tu dans la plaine?"

— *Le Saule II.*

la plaine ? Mais je te vois t'abaisser sur les bords de l'horizon. Déjà tu te places dans les eaux ; les vagues se rassemblent autour de toi, et baignent ton aimable chevelure. Adieu, étoile silencieuse. Que la lumière de mon génie brille à ta place.”¹

It might easily be supposed that with this favorable reception, Le Tourneur, who was not slow to perceive and to take advantage of the trend of popular taste, would have at once prepared a complete translation of the Gaelic poet. It is indeed probable that only lack of time prevented him from undertaking this congenial task. But besides the translations of Young and Hervey, he was busy this same year with the Lives of Savage and Thomson, and the History of Charles V, and was very likely engaged upon the translation of Shakespeare. So it was not until 1777 that he found the requisite leisure to introduce Ossian fully and ceremoniously to France.² The poet's entry then, though late, was in the nature of a triumph,

¹ *Choix de Contes et de Poésies erses*, Vol. II. p. 72.

² Ossian, *Fils de Fingal, Barde du Troisième Siècle. Poésies Galliques*, traduites sur l'Anglois de M. Macpherson par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1777, 2 vols. in 8vo (Approb., 17 novembre, 1774 ; Privilège, 15 mars, 1775).

and soon, thanks to Le Tourneur's interpretation, he became a well-known and influential figure in European literature.

The translation itself is a distinct advance in ease and accuracy upon those of Young and Hervey, and few liberties have been taken with the text. How nearly faithful Le Tourneur could be when he chose, will be seen from the following lines :

“The setting sun was yellow on Dora.
Grey evening began to descend. Temora’s
woods shook with the blast of the inconstant
wind. A cloud at length gathered in the
West, and a red star looked from behind its
edge. I stood in the wood alone, and saw a
ghost on the darkening air. His stride ex-
tended from hill to hill; his shield was dim
on his side. It was the son of Semo; I knew
the warrior’s face. But he passed away in
his blast; and all was dark around.”—*Temora*,
Bk. I.¹

“Le soleil couchant jaunissoit le sommet du
Dora, le soir commençoit à mêler au jour son
ombre grisâtre; d'inégales bouffées de vent agi-
toient par intervalles les bois de Temora. Un

¹ Ossian, Poems, London, 1765, Vol. II. p. 24.

nuage épais se forma lentement au couchant, à la pointe du nuage paroissoit une étoile rougeâtre ; j'étois resté seul dans la forêt. Tout à coup, j'apperçois un phantôme dans les airs. Ses pas s'étendoient d'une colline à l'autre, ses flancs étoient couverts de son bouclier ténébreux. C'étoit le fils de Semo. Je reconnus les traits de Cuchullier, mais il passa rapidement dans un tourbillon de vent, et bientôt les ténèbres de la nuit le dérobèrent à ma vue."

— *Temora*, Bk. I.

The *Discours Préliminaire* which Le Tourneur prefixed to his translation, is composed almost entirely of extracts from Macpherson's essays on Ossian, and contains little of his own judgments or appreciation. Towards the end, however, a few significant lines indicate as much bitterness as the gentle soul of Le Tourneur seems to have been capable of expressing, and show that the Voltaire-Shakespeare quarrel had left him a sadder, if not a wiser, man. Macpherson, and Cesariotti, who had translated Ossian into Italian, had compared the Gothic bard to Homer. Commenting upon this, Le Tourneur without going so far in enthusiasm, declares that nevertheless Ossian is a great poet, and is ready to hold to

this opinion, even in the face of literary excommunication.¹

But Le Tourneur need not have feared. It was he, not Macpherson, who received the grateful thanks of the literary world for the service rendered in bringing Ossian to its attention. His translation was welcomed with an enthusiasm equaled only by that accorded his Young and Shakespeare, and, like them, it remained the standard until well on into the nineteenth century. La Harpe, who had been, at first, coldly critical, characterized the translation as "correct and elegant";² the *Journal de Paris*,

¹ "Il n'est pas inutile d'avertir ici que cette opinion leur appartient, et que l'exposer, ce n'est pas l'adopter sans réserve. Cette précaution devient d'autant plus nécessaire, qu'aujourd'hui un sentiment d'enthousiasme pour le génie d'un Poète étranger est presque mis au rang des crimes; qu'il faut en Littérature ne pas oublier de faire sa profession de goût, sous peine d'encourir une espèce d'excommunication littéraire, et que certains principes, fort sages, à la vérité, mais qui n'enferment pas toutes les bornes de l'art, sont érigés en dogmes sacrés hors desquels il n'est plus ni mérite ni salut. Sans placer Ossian sur la même ligne qu'Homère, nous sommes persuadés qu'il fut aussi un grand Poète, qu'il y a une foule de beautés et de traits précieux dans ses Poèmes, et qu'après la lecture de cette collection, on saura gré à M. Macpherson du service qu'il a rendu à la Littérature."

² La Harpe, *Cours de Littérature*, Paris, 1863, Vol. II. p. 728.

pronounced it "energetic, free, and pictur-esque,"¹ and Fontanes expressed the general opinion in enthusiastic, if in somewhat halting, verses :²

"O Le Tourneur ! ô toi dont la prose hardie
 Des vers audacieux osa presque imiter
 L'inimitable mélodie,
 Tu découvris plus d'une fois
 Des trésors inconnus aux muses de notre âge,
 Et quoique, de nos vers méconnaissant les droits,
 Tu sembles réprover leur utile esclavage.
 Des poètes français je te porte l'hommage.
 Mais puis-je espérer que ma voix
 Leur rendra jamais ton suffrage ?"

Ossian, like Young, exercised an undeniable influence upon European literature, and was an important factor in the first faint beginnings of the Romantic movement. His poetry was translated into Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and Dutch, but its sphere of greatest influence was in France³ and Germany.⁴ It created almost a

¹ *Journal de Paris*, Mar. 25, 1777.

² Fontanes, *Œuvres*, Paris, 1839, Vol. I. p. 396.

³ For Ossian in France, see *Journal des Débats*, Nov. 13 and 27, 1894, two articles by Arvède Barine. Also *Texte, J. J. Rousseau et le Cosmopolitisme littéraire*. Paris, 1895.

⁴ For Ossian in Germany, see Bailey Saunders, *Life and Letters of James Macpherson*. London, 1894. *Ossian in Germany*, Rudolf Tombo. New York, 1901.

revolution in Klopstock's circle. Its influence was strongly felt by Goethe, and shown especially in *Werther*, where the hero says, "Ossian has supplanted Homer in my heart," and it was Ossian that he and Charlotte were reading on that last fatal night.

In France, Ossian's influence was even more widespread, although, at first, La Harpe and Voltaire and others held somewhat aloof.¹ But they were exceptions and were powerless to check the steady, onward flow of the current. Other men of letters followed Le Tourneur's example, notably Baour-Lormian, who in 1801 made a translation, expressly, it is said, for the use of the French army. Cesarotti's Italian version was Napoleon's favorite reading and the translator was handsomely rewarded. Mme. de Staël devoted a chapter in her *Littérature* to the discussion of the statement, "Il existe, ce me semble, deux littératures tout à fait distinctes,

¹ *Journal encyclopédique*, January, 1762.

"Tout son mérite (*Fingal*) consiste à peu près dans son antiquité. Une traduction françoise de cet ouvrage seroit certainement insupportable." To which Lessing replies, "Desto schlimmer für die Franzosen." (*Collectaneen aus dem Nachlass.*)

celle qui vient du midi et celle qui descend du Nord, celle dont Homère est la première source, celle dont Ossian est l'origine.”¹ Two years later, Chateaubriand, in the *Génie du Christianisme*, described his impressions upon reading Ossian.² Lamartine, in his *Confidences*, speaks of the admiration he felt in his youth for these Gaelic poems.³ Alfred de Musset put into liquid measures the beginning of the *Chants de Selma* already quoted, and the poetry of Leopardi has echoes of Ossian’s weird and plaintive music. Edgar Quinet felt the spell,⁴ and George Sand read Ossian to divert her from the sorrows of her married life.⁵ Furthermore, a tragedy,⁶ several paintings,⁷ and an opera⁸ testified to the hold which the Gaelic poet had taken upon French minds and hearts.

The publication of Ossian’s poems in 1777 concluded Le Tourneur’s work as the interpreter of English poetry of the school of melan-

¹ Mm de Staël, *De la Littérature*, Chap. XI.

² Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du Christianisme*, Chap. IV.

³ Lamartine, *Les Confidences*, Bk. VI. pp. 6–10.

⁴ Edgar Quinet, *Histoire de mes Idées*, p. 132.

⁵ George Sand, *Histoire de ma Vie*, Vol. IV. Chap. I.

⁶ Arnauld, *Oscar, Fils d’Ossian*, 1793.

⁷ Girodet-Trioson, 1802.

⁸ Lesueur, *Les Bardes*, 1804.

choly. Henceforward, with the exception of Shakespeare and Ariosto, he was to devote himself to the translation of prose, and although his later labors far exceeded the earlier in bulk, these first half dozen volumes contain what is best and most enduring of his work. His Young, Hervey, and Ossian introduced a new kind of literature to France and gave a vigorous impulse to the movement which was to dominate European literature for the next fifty years. His translations of these three authors long remained the standard of interpretation of what was felt to be the best in English literature, and are, thus, significant in the study of English influence upon Continental letters. To the modern scientific scholar they are in many ways exasperating, and he is tempted at first sight to pronounce them practically worthless. As a translator, Le Tourneur is far from perfect. He is frequently inaccurate, he is often high flown and bombastic in style where he should be simple and direct, he takes great liberties with his text, omitting, adding, transposing, paraphrasing at his own will, with a boldness and freedom calculated to scandalize the conscientious worker. The fact that his contemporaries not only ex-

cused, but actually approved, this apparently unjustifiable method, simply shows that there was, in the eighteenth century critical mind, an entirely different conception of the duties and prerogatives of the translator from that which obtains to-day; and this must be kept in mind in any judgment of Le Tourneur's work. He is an interpreter of literature rather than a translator; a prism, which catches and reflects in many colored lights, rather than a mirror, which clearly shows objects as they actually are. From this point of view he succeeded admirably in his undertaking. With all his faults, he still manages to seize the essential meaning, to catch and preserve the atmosphere of the original, adding at the same time a delicate flavor of his own which blends harmoniously and almost imperceptibly with that of his author. What Young loses of his stately blank verse and his impressive periods, he gains in clearness and directness and in the cameo-like rearrangement of his immense masses of material. Hervey's lugubrious reflections lose the grotesque touches which unintentionally enliven them, but gain in elegance and conciseness; and through the stilted prose of Le Tourneur may still be felt

much of the weird, mysterious charm of the Ossianic poems.

Le Tourneur's end seems to have justified his means, and his method proved successful by its results. At all events, it was well suited to his public and his time. It is, indeed, a question whether an accurate and scientific translation would or could have accomplished the work of his adaptations; whether France, worshiping devoutly at the shrine of *Le Bon Goût*, would have admired or welcomed these English poets in all their "barbaric crudeness." It may be doubted whether, if Young, Hervey, and Ossian had been introduced to France with less preparation and less ceremony, they would have been received with as much enthusiasm and gained as rapidly as firm a foothold in France. That they did so is, of course, due in part to the stage of development of literary taste which France had then reached. The time was ripe for their appearance; all circumstances were favorable. Nevertheless, their great success and their widespread influence must have been due in part to the work of Le Tourneur, who had the power and the skill so to present these unusual strangers to his countrymen that they

were no longer aliens, but became at once citizens of France. It is perhaps not too much to say that without his insight, his good judgment, and his tact, the success of the Grave Yard School of poetry in France would have been smaller, and the march of the Romantic Movement perceptibly retarded.

IV. MINOR TRANSLATIONS: ENGLISH, GERMAN, ITALIAN

THE translator of Young, Ossian, and Shakespeare did not confine himself to these considerable achievements. During the eighteen years following the appearance of the *Nuits*, he produced about a dozen other translations of varying length and interest. They are, for the most part, from English literature, although he tried his hand at one or two German works and even experimented with Italian poetry. These translations include moral tales, novels, biography, history, stories of exploration and adventure, a single religious work, and a volume of poetry. But in spite of this wide range of subjects Le Tourneur seems to have had no fixed system of selection from the vast field of literature. Whether he was forced by circumstances to devote himself to a sort of hack work, or whether he lost the fine sense of discrimination and appreciation which led him to choose to inter-

pret Shakespeare, it would be difficult to determine. The fact remains that with the exception of *Clarissa Harlowe* and Robertson's *History of Charles V.*, he translated nothing of any permanent or intrinsic literary value. His labors during these years were confined to works of a purely temporary interest, which have fallen into more or less obscurity, and the originals of which, in some cases, it has been impossible to trace. They represent no one school or phase of literary development, but seem rather to be the hap-hazard work of an omnivorous reader who set himself to translate whatever struck his individual fancy. Any serious attempt to group them thus becomes impracticable, and they will best be considered, for the most part, in the order in which Le Tourneur produced them.

True to his promise of 1770 to abandon cemeteries and yew trees, he published, the following year, a *Choix de Contes et de Poésies érites*.¹ The fourteen *Contes* which fill the first volume consist of short moral tales somewhat after the manner of Marmontel. The scene is generally laid in England, although there is one in Green-

¹ *Choix de Contes et de Poésies érites*, traduits de l'Anglois, par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1771, 2 vols. in 8vo.

land,¹ one in Spain,² one in Persia,³ and one in India.⁴ There is, however, little local color, and they are rather mediocre in theme and treatment, with only now and then a touch of grace or humor. Such a sentence as "Un Roi de Perse eut le génie de se douter que ses flatteurs pouvoient mentir"⁵ is sufficiently rare to make it noticeable, and marks the beginning of one of the most graceful stories in the collection. The ordinary themes are employed, such as the reward of virtue, fraternal love, the cruel stepmother, the folly of judging from appearances, the consequences of a hasty marriage, and the like, and their development shows little ingenuity or originality.

The most pleasing are perhaps *Eudoxie, ou le beau projet de solitude*, and *Les Amours de Groenland*. The former relates how a young girl, upon the death of her mother, decides to spend her life in pious solitude on one of her country estates. The lover, Alphenor, who, if young in years, is old in wisdom, stipulates only that he may come to visit her after three months

¹ Ammingait et Ajut.

³ Le Ministre Berger.

² Le Ministre Philosophe.

⁴ Où trouver des Amis.

⁵ Le Ministre Berger.

have elapsed. Eudoxie is perfectly happy. The first week she spends in arranging the house, and the second in pious devotions. The third, she begins to be bored, and by the fourth she is looking eagerly forward to the coming of Alphenor. This the wily youth purposely delays, and when he at length appears, it is to tell his mistress, with a sigh of admiration for her and despair for himself, that he, too, has been living the solitary life, and finds it absolutely unbearable. At hearing this expression of her own feelings, Eudoxie lets fall a tear. “‘Que vous êtes obligeante,’ lui dit Alphenor, ‘d’être si sensible au malheur de votre ami.’” Confessions and explanations follow, the two are united, and presumably live happy ever after.

The charm of the Greenland story lies in its unusual local color, and in the lyric touches, especially in Ajut’s prayer for her lover who leaves her to seek his fortune in the winter sea.¹

¹ “Puissent ses mains être plus fortes que les griffes de l’ours ; ses pieds plus légers que les pieds du renne ! puisse sa flèche ne manquer jamais son but, et son bateau ne faire jamais eau ! puisse-t-il ne jamais tomber sur les glaçons ou s’évanouir dans les flots ! que le veau marin vienne de lui-même se prendre à son harpon, et que la baleine blessée de son dard s’agite en vain dans les vagues !” *Choix de Contes*, p. 190.

The *Lettres Angloises*,¹ which, together with the *Poésies erves*, form the second volume, continue the moral instruction of the tales in a series of letters upon *Le Bonheur*, *Des Mariages prématurés*, *L'Amitié*, *Le Jeu*, and similar subjects. They contain much sound advice and common sense, but little originality of thought or treatment. The best is one on "Le Tems," in which the author relates a dream. He found himself before the throne of Rhadamanthus, who was that day assigning their places to the souls of women, sending them to Tartarus on his left, or to the Elysian Fields on his right.
"‘Madame,’ dit-il à la première, ‘vous avez été environ cinquante ans sur la terre, qu’avez-vous fait pendant tout ce tems-là?’ ‘Ce que j’ai fait,’ dit-elle, ‘en vérité je n’en sais rien, ce que j’ai fait ; il faudroit me donner quelque tems pour me recueillir et me le rappeler.’ Après une demi-heure de réflexion, elle répondit qu’elle les avoit passés à jouer au Whist ; là-dessus Rhadamanthus dit au geolier de sa gauche de s’en charger.” The second woman

¹ Two of these *Lettres Angloises*, are addressed to *Le Gardien*, which might mean the English periodical *The Guardian*.

had spent her time reading novels, another in making pomade, but there came, finally, a “bonne ménagère de campagne toute unie: ‘hé bien, ma chère,’ dit Rhadamanthus, ‘qu’avez-vous fait?’ ‘Monseigneur, je n’ai pas vécu tout à fait quarante ans. Pendant ce tems-là, j’ai donné sept filles à mon mari, je lui ai fait neuf mille fromages, et je l’ai laissé avec ma fille ainée pour avoir soin du ménage pendant mon absence, et je peux me vanter que c’est une des bonnes ménagères qu’il y ait dans le canton.’ Rhadamanthus sourit de la simplicité de cette bonne femme et la consigna au Portier des Champs Elysées.”¹

These tales, slight as they were, were received with pleasure by a public already a little sated with the gloomy reflections of Young and Hervey. The *Année Littéraire*² in particular, spoke of them with enthusiasm and quoted the description of the Abbess in *Eudoxie* as a portrait worthy of the pen of La Bruyère.³ Ignor-

¹ *Choix de Contes et de Poésies érites*, Vol. II. p. 164.

² *Année Littéraire*, June, 1772.

³ “L’abbesse étoit un vrai modèle de chasteté, il est vrai que cette vertu n’étoit pas chez elle fort méritoire. On avoit connu son caractère avant qu’elle fût chargée du gouvernement de cette communauté. Ses jeûnes étoient l’effet de

rance of the English originals makes it impossible to judge of the merits of the translation. It is probable, however, that these tales appeared in some periodical, and were combined by Le Tourneur into one collection. Probably, too, in accordance with his usual method, they were more or less adapted and condensed to suit his purpose. The result is sufficiently pleasing, and will afford even the modern reader a mildly diverting hour.

But even this gentle relaxation of the short-story did not long detain the serious-minded Le Tourneur. The same year, almost as if to make amends for his momentary lapse into a lighter vein, he published his *Vie de Savage et de Thomson*,¹ and collaborated in a translation of Robertson's *History of Charles V*. The *Vie de*

son avarice et sa dévotion le refuge de son humeur noire, et mélancolique. Dépenser peu, c'étoit dans ses idées le plus grand bonheur de l'homme, et la perfection de la piété ; elle mettoit la prodigalité au nombre des sept péchés mortels ; elle préféroit un cilice à une robe élégante, et des cendres aux parfums, par la raison qu'elles coûtoient moins cher ; toutes les fois qu'on brisoit un vase, c'étoit un jour de jeûnes pour la communauté."

¹ *Histoire de Richard Savage et de J. Thomson*, traduites de l'Anglois, par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1771. (approb. 11 avril, 1771; Privilège 14 décembre, 1770), lu et approuvé le 21 mai, 1769.

Savage et de Thomson contained, by way of preface, a prose translation of Churchill's poem, *The Author*.¹ This long poem in ten-syllable rhyming couplets, which describes, with occasional flashes of vigor, the degenerate condition of English authors, appears here in an abridged paraphrase, shorn of most of its contemporary allusions, and rendered as nearly as possible a moral essay of universal application.² In his

¹ Churchill, Charles (1731-1784), author of the *Rosciad*, 1761; *Gotham*, 1714; *The Author*, 1764; *The Candidate*, 1764, etc.

² Accurs'd the man, whom fate ordains in spite,
And cruel Parents teach to Read and Write !
What need of Letters ? Wherefore should we spell ?
Why write our names ? A mark will do as well.
Much are the precious hours of youth misspent,
In climbing Learning's rugged steep ascent ;
When to the top the bold adventurer's got,
He reigns, vain monarch o'er a barren spot.
While in the vale of Ignorance below,
Folly and vice to rank luxuriance grow ;
Honours and wealth pour in on ev'ry side,
And Proud Preferment rolls her golden tide."

— Churchill, *Poems*, London, 1765, Vol. II.

" Malheur à l'homme à qui nos parens ont appris à lire, et que le destin dans sa colère, a condamné à écrire ! Que de jours perdus à se frayer péniblement la route de la science ! Et que gagne un Écrivain, qui, après mille efforts, atteint sa cime escarpée ? *Monarque, ridicullement vain, il*

translation of Dr. Johnson's *Life of Savage*, however, Le Tourneur is much more exact, contenting himself only with the occasional interposition of a phrase or word, apparently for the sake of enhancing the human interest of the narrative.

"Savage," says Johnson, "was at the same time so touched with the discovery of his real mother, that it was his frequent practice to walk in the dark evenings, for several hours, before her door, in hopes of seeing her as she might come by accident to the window or cross her apartment with a candle in her hand."¹

"Savage fut si touché," relates Le Tourneur, "de la découverte de sa véritable mère, et *si sensible à sa haine, qu'il ne pouvoit renoncer à l'espoir de la flétrir*. Pendant longtems il se rendoit tous les soirs à la nuit devant sa porte et y restoit des heures entières, dans l'espérance *règne sur un empire imaginaire*, tandis qu'au dessous de lui, dans les vastes champs de l'ignorance, il voit le vice et la folie usurper les honneurs et l'or rouler à grands flots vers les demeures de la sottise." Here speaks the translator of Young, and here are two careless or wilful mistranslations; "vain monarch" is *inutile*, not *vain*, and a "barren spot" is by no means necessarily *imaginaire*.

¹ *The English Poets*, London, 1810, Vol. XI. p. 246.

que le hasard pourroit la conduire à sa fenêtre,
ou ou'il auroit du moins la satisfaction de la voir
traversant ses appartemens un flambeau à la
main." (p. 16.)

It is not difficult to see here the probable working of Le Tourneur's mind. The interpolated phrases express what would have been his own feeling under similar circumstances, and probably what Savage felt and Johnson neglected to state. Why not, then, add what was so evidently true? Why be miserably exact, when an added touch of truth will increase the interest? With the same laudable intention, no doubt, he inserts, at appropriate intervals, translations of most of Savage's short poems mentioned by Johnson in the course of his biography, and thus Le Tourneur's version is considerably the longer. The *Vie de Thomson* is an abridged translation of an anonymous biography prefixed to an edition of Thomson's works in 1763.¹ It received the least notice of the three pieces which compose the volume. Thomson was already well known in France,²

¹ James Thomson, *Works*, London, 1763, 2 vols.

² *Les Saisons*, poème traduit de l'Anglois de Thomson (Mme. de Bontems), Paris, 1759, in 8vo.

and this slight sketch of his life was of no appreciable added interest or value.¹

L'Auteur and the *Histoire de Savage* carried off the honors. The former, "M. Le Tourneur a traduit avec cette vigueur qu'il a répandue dans sa traduction des ouvrages d'Young. Ce volume fait honneur, au Traducteur, à l'Auteur et aux héros de ces histoires."²

This same year of 1771 saw yet another work by Le Tourneur, the fourth which had come from his pen within the twelve months.³ The third and fourth volumes of Suard's translation of Robertson's *History of Charles V.*⁴ are said to have been intrusted to Le Tourneur.⁵ He acquitted himself of this task with skill, and with a greater fidelity to the text than he had shown hitherto.

The last return of Le Tourneur to the more serious and somber kind of literature is a reli-

¹ For Thomson in France, see *Texte*, and Léon Morel, *James Thomson, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, Paris, 1895.

² *Journal Encyclopédique*, May, 1771.

³ Hervey, *Choix de Contes, Histoire de Savage, Charles V.*

⁴ *L'Histoire du Règne de l'Empereur Charles Quint*, par M. Robertson. Ouvrage traduit de l'Anglois. Paris et Amsterdam, 1771.

⁵ Quérard, *La France Littéraire*; Barbier, *Dictionnaire des Ouvrages Anonymes*, Paris, 1874.

gious pamphlet which echoes the philosophy of Young, but breathes a new note of scientific optimism. Jenyns¹ *Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* was published in 1776, and a translation had already appeared in France² before Le Tourneur undertook to render it.³ Jenyns develops his subject with clearness, logic, and simplicity, and in his cool, impartial examination of facts seems to foreshadow the modern "higher criticism" of the Bible. His argument is that of Pascal: that an examination of the Christian religion itself, apart from any proofs deduced from miracles or prophecies, will show conclusively that it cannot be the invention of human wisdom or the result of human fraud. Such an examination reveals four distinct proofs: 1. The evidence of the New Testament as a historical document. 2. The

¹ Jenyns, Soame (1704-1787), author of *Poems* (1752), *Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757), *Disquisitions on Several Subjects*, 1782, etc.

² *Examen de l'évidence intrinsèque du Christianisme traduit de l'Anglois sur la 5^e édition avec des notes du traducteur*, Londres et Liège, 1778 in 8vo.

³ *Vue de l'Évidence de la Religion Chrétienne considérée en elle-même*, Traduit de l'Anglois, par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1779, 157 pp. (Approb. 4 déc. 1778; Privilège. 11 février, 1779). Note: date is wrongly printed 1769.

statement therein of a new and unique system of religion. 3. A new system of morality, which by its very character 4. cannot be of human invention. The existence of Christ and of the New Testament are historical facts. The Christian doctrine is unique in considering this world merely a preparation for the next; in the conception of the Trinity, etc. Its leader, Christ, was of a character so extraordinary, and inculcated principles so at variance with human nature and inclination, that by their very divergence from the range of human reason and conception, we are forced to believe them of divine origin. The pamphlet aroused a long controversy in England, but awakened only a mild interest in France, which was still full of the Shakespeare war. Le Tourneur's translation, which very well preserved the logic, clearness, and simplicity of the original, reached four editions, the last appearing in 1803.¹

The same year of 1779 Le Tourneur began

¹ *De l'Évidence de la Religion Chrétienne*, ouvrage traduit de l'anglois par Le Tourneur. IV édition, augmentée d'un Plan de Fénelon et de Pensées sur la Providence, Paris, an XL.

his second work of collaboration, the *Histoire Universelle*, a gigantic work in one hundred and twenty-six volumes, which came out at intervals during the next ten years.¹

His most serious and individual work in history, however, was the text written to accompany a series of pictures illustrating the history of England and published by David in 1784.² The work, which was brought out in an édition de luxe, limited to four hundred and twenty-five copies, on fine heavy paper and in sumptuous binding, was dedicated to Monsieur in a joint letter by David and Le Tourneur. The one hundred and fifty engravings were copied from masterpieces of painting and sculpture, and the text, compiled by Le Tourneur from various English historians, was not only to describe the pictures, but, according to the Prospectus, would

¹ *Histoire Universelle*, depuis le commencement du monde jusqu'à présent, composée en anglois par une société de gens de lettres : traduction nouvelle (par P. Le Tourneur, L. d'Ursieux, F. G. Goffaux et autres). Paris, 1779-1789, 126 vols. in 8vo (cited by Barbier, *Dictionnaire des Ouvrages Anonymes*, Paris, 1874, Vol. II.).

² *Histoire d'Angleterre*, représentée par Figures, accompagnées d'un Précis Historique. Dédié et présenté à Monsieur, Frère du Roi, Paris 1784, 2 vols. in 4to (Privil. 12 décembre, 1783).

form an outline history of England, which might be read with interest and pleasure quite independently of the engravings. These ranged from the time of the Druids down to the reign of George II., and represented the more dramatic moments in English history, such as the death of King Arthur, Canute by the seashore, the return of the seals to Henry II. by Thomas à Becket, etc. The moment of William the Conqueror's fall, on landing for the first time in England, forms the subject of one of the engravings, and the accompanying text shows very well the general character of the whole.¹ It

¹ Chute de Guillaume en 1066

“Guillaume sortant de sa chaloupe se lance et tombe sur le sable. Cette chute au premier pas pouvoit être mal interprétée par une multitude disposée à tourner tout en présages. Il le sentit à l'instant, et eut la présence d'esprit de crier en se relevant : ‘J'ai pris possession de cette terre.’ Un soldat court aussitôt à la cabane voisine, en arrache une poignée de chaume et revient l'offrir au Général, comme un signe d'investiture du Royaume. Tous les soldats d'applaudir : la joie et l'espoir du butin remplissent leurs coeurs. Ils apprennent la victoire récente de Harold et n'en sont point émus ; ils n'aspirent qu'à combattre un ennemi déjà vaincu dans leur imagination. Ainsi tiennent souvent aux plus vaines minuties les plus grands événements et l'opinion des hommes à tort.” Vol. I. p. 97.

(The dots were put in to indicate that part of the text which directly describes the engraving.)

seems probable that the heavy quarto volumes in their luxurious binding were as eagerly sought, and filled the same place, in the later eighteenth century as the modern "gift book" with its pictures and accompanying descriptions of foreign lands.

Scarcely pausing to draw breath after the great labor of the translation of Shakespeare, Le Tourneur turned his facile pen in the direction of the novel, and in the same year as the *Histoire d'Angleterre* published *Le Sylphe*, the translation of an English work.¹ This eighteenth-century novel is the usual popular tale of the marriage of a young and virtuous country girl, Julie Gréville, to a libertine, Sir William Stanley, and of her trials and disillusionment in fashionable London society. The story is told in letters from Sir William to his friend Lord Bidulph and from Julie to her sister Louise, who remains with the father at their home in the valley of Woodley, near Abergavenny in Wales. Julie's struggles to be true to her husband and to her own ideals

¹ *Le Sylphe*, traduit de l'Anglois, Genève et Paris, 1784. 1 vol. in 2 pts., 500 pp. (The work was published anonymously, but is attributed to Le Tourneur by Quérard and Barbier.)

of virtue, in the midst of the corrupt society in which she is placed, and in face of the bitterness of disillusion, are rendered more difficult by the appearance of the Baron Tonhausen, an upright and honorable man, who becomes her faithful friend, and with whom, to her horror, she presently discovers that she is falling in love. Helpless and friendless, she is in despair, but is saved at this critical moment by the interposition of the Sylph, who begins with her a secret correspondence, warning her of threatened dangers, and encouraging her to constancy and to virtue. This unseen friend represents himself as her Guardian Angel, who unknown to her sees her daily, loves her like a father, and reads her inmost soul. Blindly trusting this invisible and mysterious protector, Julie is enabled, by his counsels, to escape the vile machinations of Bidulph to seduce her, and of Stanley to get possession of her fortune, and at the death of her husband, who obligingly blows his brains out, to return pure and virtuous to her country home. Before the end of the first volume, the discerning reader has easily guessed that the Sylph and the Baron Tonhausen are one and the same, and is not surprised to learn, a little

later, that both are identical with Henry Woodley, Julie's youthful lover who had gone to London to make his fortune before the appearance of Stanley on the scene. But now his difficulties begin. The artful Sylph had extracted from Julie a promise never to engage her affections without his consent, and, faithful to him, and to the Baron Tonhausen who has strangely and mysteriously disappeared, and to whose memory she proposes to devote what remains of her shattered life, she utterly refuses to listen to the advances of the constant and adoring Henry. It is only by appearing before her in his threefold character that he is at length able to win her hand, and to live ever after in the peace and prosperity his long-continued devotion and virtue have deserved.

A characteristic touch of Le Tourneur is the omission, as irrelevant, of the story of Julie's father, who withdrew from the world to live in seclusion in the country.¹ Like him, too, is the explanation in a footnote of two quotations from Shakespeare, cited by Sir William in his first

¹ It was printed in *Le Jardin Anglois*, 1788, Vol. II. pp. 59–104, under the title “*Lettre d'un Père retiré à la campagne à sa Fille nouvellement mariée et établie à Londres, qui lui avoit demandé la cause de sa retraite.*”

letter.¹ The novel, as a whole, offers nothing particularly worthy of note in style or subject, although the rather ingenious plot may awaken a mild and temporary interest.² The reader may well be roused to envy and admiration, however, by the description of a beautiful hair medallion which Julie sent to the Sylph as a pledge of her confidence.

“J’ai envoyé ce matin au café d’Anderton, le plus élégant médaillon en cheveux que vous ayez jamais vu. Le médaillon est de la forme et grandeur du bracelet que je vous ai envoyé; le sujet, un autel sur lequel sont inscrits ces mots: *à la Reconnaissance*; une figure élégante de femme à genoux, présentant son offrande, et un petit chérubin ailé, qui porte l’encens vers le ciel; une légère tresse de cheveux à peu

¹“Un matin que j’errois sur ces montagnes au front casqué de nuages.” Note: “expression de Shakespeare dans la Tempête, ‘cloud-capt,’ ” p. 5.

“Je fis donc comme la Patience sur un Tombeau.” Note: “autre image de Shakespeare,” p. 7.

² There seems to be a reminiscence of the Italian *cicisbeo* in the following passage:

“Lord Bidulph est ce que Lady Besfort appelle mon *sigisbée*: c’est à dire qu’il se charge de m’accompagner en public, de faire approcher ma chaise, de me faire passer des rafraîchissements, etc., mais je vous assure que tout cela ne le rend pas plus agréable à mes yeux.”

près de la largeur d'un petit ruban est attachée à chaque côté du médaillon vers le haut par trois brillans et un anneau en diamans, par où l'on peut le suspendre à un ruban. Je vous assure que cela est extrêmement joli."

A more cheerful, although a less ingenious story, is the *Mémoires intéressans par une Lady*, which was published the year of Le Tourneur's death, in 1788.¹ It is a tale of the difficulties besetting the course of true love in the history of Louise Seymour and the young Lord Henry Hastings. Their fathers had been lifelong friends, they themselves childhood playmates, and, at the opening of the story, they live at adjacent country seats in England. Misfortunes soon come to trouble their dream of happiness. Louise's father dies, her fortune is lost, and her mother becomes a hopeless invalid. Louise and her mother start for France to spend a winter at St. Germain-en-Laye, in a vain hope to restore Mrs. Seymour's health. At Dover they meet Mrs. Stanhope and her son, bent upon a similar errand, and Stanhope naturally

¹ *Mémoires intéressans par une Lady*, traduits de l'Anglois par feu M. Le Tourneur, Londres et Paris, 1788, 2 vols. environ, 400 pp.

loses no time in falling in love with the amiable Louise.

In the meantime, the father and mother of Lord Hastings plan a splendid match for their son with the rich and charming Lady Charlotte Villiers. After the death of Mrs. Seymour, which occurs the following year, Louise goes to make her home in the family of Lord Hastings. She meekly accepts her fate, makes friends with her rival, and prepares to pine away, faithful to her love for Henry. By means of a letter and a portrait (his own), which he surprises Louise one day in the act of kissing, Henry is led to believe that she loves another, and, in despair, hastens to drown his grief in foreign travel. Louise, who realizes his mistake, is too proud to disabuse him. Henry is summoned home, after a decent interval, by the death of his father, and one day shortly after this sad event he is begged by his mother, who notices the young girl's pallor and weakness, to take Louise for a walk. They reach a bench in the garden and sit down to rest. Then there is a long and embarrassing silence, which is, at length, broken by the arrival of the climax of the story.

“Enfin le jeune Lord, levant les yeux et les fixant sur Louise d'un air timide et respectueux: ‘O, Miss Seymour,’ dit-il, ‘la tranquillité dont vous paroissez jouir à présent est-elle une preuve que tous les obstacles qui s'opposoient à votre bonheur sont enfin détruits? et pourrois-je espérer?’ — Vol. II. p. 208.

Louise is so overcome with emotion at his first words that she faints in the arms of her lover. He unfastens her mantle to give her air, and, in his agitation, pulls out his portrait which she wore around her neck. Explanations ensue, and “la conversation qui suivit cette intéressante scène fut délicieuse pour ces heureux amans.”

All is easily and happily arranged; Lady Charlotte obligingly becomes engaged to Lord Lester, and Lord Stanhope who, ever since he met Louise at Dover, has been hovering uncertainly but faithfully in the background, now mysteriously disappears altogether. This simple but inartistic method of disposing of obstacles grated upon the critical sense of Le Tourneur, who protested vigorously and naïvely in a note at the end of the translation.¹

¹ Note du Traducteur: “Je suis vraiment fort en peine du pauvre Sir Stanhope. Après lui avoir fait jouer un rôle

The story is told partly in narrative, partly by letters. There are pleasant glimpses of St. Germain-en-Laye and of St. Cyr, where Louise spent a winter as pensionnaire, and the French translation reads pleasantly and smoothly.

Le Tourneur's greatest achievement in the translation of novels was his version of Clarissa Harlowe, which appeared in 1785.¹ Unfortunately for the increase of his fame, he cannot be said to have introduced Richardson to Europe, nor even to have made the standard translation of Clarissa. The English novelist had been already well known in France for upwards of thirty years. As early as 1742 *Pamela*² was translated by the Abbé Prévost and his version

assez intéressant comme amant aussi généreux que malheureux, on le laisse, on ne sait comment ni où. Si j'eusse suivi mon inclination, je lui aurois fait un beau sort, pour tranquilliser les lecteurs sur son compte. Pourquoi ne pas, au moins, le faire mourir d'un beau désespoir ? Je suis persuadé que cet incident n'auroit pas été le moins estimé dans l'ouvrage, ces catastrophes plaisent beaucoup à nos lecteurs de romans ; et plus il y a de morts tragiques le long d'un roman, plus le livre a d'intérêt, et est sûr de faire fortune."

¹ *Clarisse Harlowe*, traduction nouvelle et seule complète, par M. Le Tourneur, Paris et Genève, 1785, 10 vols. in 8vo.

² *Pamela, ou, la Vertu récompensée*, traduit de l'anglois, Londres, 1742.

of Clarissa appeared in 1751.¹ Europe had gone wild over Clarissa as it was to do later over Young and Ossian. Richardson's admirable pictures of manners, his seriousness, his pathos, and, above all, his morality and his sentimentality, struck at once a responsive chord in France. His great popularity was largely instrumental in preparing the way for the revolution in taste which made possible the reception and success of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and the appreciation of sentimental and melancholy literature.²

Prévost's translation, however, was far from complete or even accurate. He announced boldly in the preface, "par le droit suprême de tout écrivain qui cherche à plaire dans sa langue naturelle, j'ai changé ou supprimé ce que je n'ai pas jugé conforme à cette vue." For, "depuis vingt ans que la littérature Angloise est connue à Paris, on sait que pour s'y faire naturaliser, elle a souvent besoin de ces petites réparations." Nevertheless, "les droits d'un traducteur ne vont pas jusqu'à transformer la substance d'un Livre, en lui prêtant un nouveau langage."

¹ *Lettres Angloises, ou, Histoire de Clarisse Harlowe*, traduit de l'anglois, Paris, 1751, 4 vols. in 12mo.

² For an account of Richardson in France, see *Texte*.

This is Le Tourneur's own method, and he might have found here a justification for his treatment of Young. Yet the work of Prévost, with all its actual mistakes, its omissions, inaccuracies, and changes, preserved enough of Richardson's essential character and atmosphere to take Paris by storm and to influence profoundly the development of the French novel. Still, in the case of so popular and valuable a work as *Clarissa* the need was felt of a more complete and faithful translation, and this need Le Tourneur undertook to fill.

This "aimable et intéressante production du génie," he says in the *Prospectus*, has never been adequately published in France, in regard to type, paper, or illustrations. Accordingly, his edition is a handsome one, in ten large octavo volumes, printed on fine, heavy paper, illustrated with engravings by the celebrated Chodowiecki, dedicated to Monsieur, and preceded by Diderot's famous "Éloge de Richardson." In his preface, Le Tourneur is keenly appreciative of Prévost and his work. But he is aghast at the size and number of the omissions made by his predecessor, which would suffice alone to make a new edition, and among which there are scenes and passages

of such power that, in translating them, his own pen has been forced to pause, "noyée dans les larmes." He has not, therefore, attempted to revise the former translation, but has made his own directly from the English edition which had the revision of Richardson himself. He fully recognizes the faults in Prévost's work, but realizes, too, that they are due to haste, not to lack of ability,¹ and he adds gracefully, "Il a bien fait d'épargner le temps et de se hâter de produire."

Le Tourneur's translation proved to be all that he claimed for it: a thorough and careful piece of work, published in a dignified and handsome edition. Throughout the whole ten volumes, he painstakingly enclosed in brackets every word, phrase, line, and page omitted in the translation of his predecessor, so that the now enlightened public was able to realize what it had been

¹ ". . . Ses fautes, comme de rendre partout le mot *friends* par celui d'*Amis* qui est bien sa signification générale, mais qui signifie aussi *parens*. (Le frère, et la sœur Arabelle étoient bien *parens* de Clarisse, mais ils n'étoient pas sûrement ses amis). . . . Ces fautes échappoient à sa plume élégante et facile, mais rapide et qui courroit vers d'autres productions originales plus flatteuses pour son talent et sa réputation." (Préface.)

losing.¹ Prévost's omissions were many and various, consisting, many times, of a coarse word or expression; again, of a whole paragraph or letter. Among his more important concessions to French taste were the omission of the death of Mrs. Sinclair, Leman's letter to Lovelace, the death of Belton, the episode of Clarissa's coffin, the description of her funeral, and her posthumous letters. Le Tourneur inserted all these, together with "l'Examen de quelques objections faites à l'auteur sur la catastrophe et différentes parties de cette histoire."

Both translators quail before the faults of

¹ "Mais pour revenir à ma belle coquette, je ne pus *supporter* que la première femme qui m'avoit donné des chaines (chaines de soie d'ailleurs et *non pas* des chaines de fer comme celles que je porte aujourd'hui) m'eût quitté pour un petit *baronnet*: et l'oiseau une fois envolé, j'y ai attaché plus de prix que je n'y en avois jamais mis quand je le tenois en cage et que je pouvois en disposer à mon gré." — Letter XXXI. Lovelace to Bedford. Le Tourneur, Vol. I. p. 359.

"Mais pour revenir à ma Coquette, je n'avois pu "*supposer*" que la première femme qui m'avoit donné des chaines (chaines de soie d'ailleurs *fort différentes* des chaines de fer que je porte aujourd'hui) m'eût *jamais* quitté pour un *autre homme*: et lorsque je m'étois vu abandonné, j'avois attaché au faux bien que j'avois perdu, plus de prix que je ne lui avois trouvé dans la possession." — Prévost, Vol. I. Part II. p. 35.

spelling in Joseph Leman's letter and in that of Will Somers, and Le Tourneur declares that "l'orthographe est grossièrement défectueuse et l'imitation seroit choquante et illisible en françois."

Le Tourneur's translation is a better piece of work than that of Prévost; more complete, more exact, more rapid in movement, more concise in expression. Yet, as might be expected from the length of the work, and the character of the translator, it is not free from errors. It shows, in places, traces of haste, actual mistranslations, and feeble paraphrases. Still, in preserving the atmosphere of Richardson, Le Tourneur is not inferior to his predecessor, as may be seen from a comparison of the two, in Lovelace's well-known lament in Clarissa's apartment after her escape to Hampstead.¹

¹ "I have been traversing her room, meditating, or taking up everything she but touched or used ; the glass she dressed at I was ready to break for not giving me the personal image it was wont to reflect of *her* whose idea is forever present with me. I call for her, now, in the tenderest, now, in the most reproachful terms, as if within hearing ; wanting her, I want my own soul, at least everything dear to it. What a void in my heart ! What a chillness in my blood, as if its circulation was arrested ! From her room to my own, in the dining room, and in and out of every place where I have

“Je viens de visiter son appartement, livré à mes farouches réflexions et prenant néanmoins avec transport dans mes mains tout ce qu'elle a touché, ou ce qu'elle employoit à son usage. J'ai été prêt à briser le miroir qui lui servoit à s'habiller, parce qu'il ne m'a pas présenté l'image qu'il a reçue tant de fois, et qui m'est pour jamais présente. Je l'appelle par son nom, comme si elle pouvoit m'entendre: tantôt dans les terms *les plus tendres*, tantôt avec les plus vifs reproches. Il semble que depuis qu'elle me manque, mon âme, ou tout ce qui étoit capable de me plaire dans la vie, m'ait abandonné! Quel vide dans mon cœur! quel froid dans mes veines! La circulation de mon sang s'est comme arrêtée! Je retourne sans cesse sur mes pas, de ma chambre à la sienne, je vais, je viens, j'entre dans la salle à manger, dans tous les lieux où je me rappelle d'avoir vu la bien-aimée de mon cœur. Mais je ne peux m'arrêter longtems dans aucun. Son aimable image fond cruellement sur moi et me la montre dans quelque attitude vive où je crois la voir encore, et me rappeler nos différens entretiens.” — seen the beloved of my heart do I hurry, in none can I tarry; her lovely image in every one, in some lively attitude, rushing cruelly upon me.” — Ed. Ballant, Vol. I. p. 286.

Lovelace to Belford, June 8. Le Tourneur,
Vol. V. p. 502.

“Je viens de visiter son appartement, livré à mes farouches réflexions, et portant néanmoins à ma bouche, tout ce qu'elle a touché, ou ce qu'elle employoit à son usage. J'ai brisé le miroir qui lui servoit à s'habiller, parce qu'il ne m'a pas représenté l'image, qu'il a reçue tant de fois et qui m'est pour jamais présente. Je l'appelle par son nom, comme si elle pouvoit m'entendre: tantôt dans des termes passionnés, tantôt avec les plus vifs reproches. Il semble que depuis qu'elle me manque, mon âme ou tout ce qui étoit capable de me plaire dans la vie m'ait cruellement abandonné. Quel vide dans mon cœur! Quel froid dans mes veines! La circulation de mon sang s'est comme arrêtée! Je retourne sans cesse sur mes pas, de ma chambre à la sienne; j'entre dans la salle à manger. Mes regards s'attachent sur tous les lieux où je me rappelle d'avoir vu les délices de mon cœur. Mais ils ne peuvent s'y fixer long-tems. Son aimable image me frappe aussitôt dans quelque attitude où je crois la voir encore, et qui fait saigner toutes mes plaies.” — Prévost,
Vol. V. p. 133.

In spite of its superiority and completeness, the translation of *Le Tourneur* failed to supersede that of *Prévost*, whose shorter version was already well known and continued to be read. It was frequently reprinted, while that of *Le Tourneur* had only reached a second edition in 1802. The majority of readers found Richardson's novel long enough in the earlier translation and were glad to be spared the coarse expressions, bizarre episodes, and many repetitions which had disappeared under *Prévost*'s chastening pen. The *Année Littéraire* expressed the general opinion in a long editorial in 1786, when it questioned the wisdom of spending time and talent on the scrupulously accurate translation of a work which it was just as well to know in an abridged form.¹

¹ "On ne peut qu'applaudir à l'infatigable activité de M. *Le Tourneur*, qui, à peine délassé de sa traduction de *Shakespeare* a entrepris et exécuté incessamment celle de *Clarisse*. On ne l'accusera point de se consumer sur des écrivains médiocres et peu dignes de ses talens et du public. *Young*, *Shakespeare* et *Richardson*, les deux derniers surtout, sont peut-être les plus grands génies de l'Angleterre. On peut encore moins lui faire le reproche de les avoir foiblement retracés ; les *Nuits d'Young* feront à jamais honneur à sa fidélité et à son énergie : *un peu trop d'exactitude et d'assujettissement au texte et au génie de Shakespeare, est le seul défaut dont on pourroit taxer son traducteur* : mais

This has continued to be the modern feeling in France, for down to the present day with one exception¹ no other complete translation of *Clarissa* has been offered to the public. Those who cared to know Richardson in his entirety went, like Diderot, to the original English; those who did not, contented themselves with the translation of Prévost² or of

outre que ce défaut est racheté d'ailleurs par mille qualités estimables, il paroît que cela tient à un principe de M. Le Tourneur, qui se pique de rendre exactement les Auteurs Anglois, tels qu'ils sont. C'est cette même raison qui l'a déterminé à donner une nouvelle traduction, une traduction complète d'un ouvrage dont l'Abbé Prévost avoit jugé à propos d'élaguer une infinité de traits. L'Abbé Prévost a pu avoir raison. M. Le Tourneur peut n'avoir pas tort. C'est au public à juger entre ces deux estimables traducteurs; ou ce qui vaut encore mieux que de juger, à applaudir à l'un et à l'autre, et à profiter des veilles de tous deux: pour nous, nous ne pouvons qu'exciter M. Le Tourneur à poursuivre son entreprise, afin de passer de cette traduction à quelqu'autre. Nous aimons tant à tenir les ouvrages Anglois de sa main." — *Année Littéraire*, 1788, Vol. II. p. 233.

¹ *Clarisse Harlowe*, traduction nouvelle et seule complète par M. Barré, Paris, 1845, 4 vols. in 8vo.

² Prévost's translation did not contain the name of Richardson, and it is possible that Alfred de Musset had read this translation instead of Le Tourneur's, and was, therefore, led into the error of attributing the creation of Lovelace to Robertson:

" Voilà l'homme d'un siècle, et l'étoile polaire
Sur qui les écoliers fixent leurs yeux ardents,

Janin, who made a shortened version in 1846.¹

Le Tourneur's "some other" translation, which the *Année Littéraire* had urged him to make, was of an entirely different character from his recent work. He essayed a rendering of Italian poetry. The *Choix d'Élégies de l'Arioste* contains twenty elegies and a dozen or so of the short Latin poems.² They are rearranged and renumbered in an order of his own choosing, and each, furthermore, receives a title indicating its subject. A few stanzas from Ariosto's ninth elegy will sufficiently indicate Le Tourneur's power as an interpreter of Italian. He has called it *La Fidélité*, and it appears as number five in his collection.

"Qual son, qual sempre fui, tal esser voglio,
Alto, o basso fortuna che mi ruote,
O siami Amor benigno, o m'usi orgoglio.

L'homme dont *Robertson* fera le commentaire,
Qui donnera sa vie à lire à nos enfants."

— *Namouna*, Chant II.

¹ *Clarisse Harlowe*, de Samuel Richardson, par Jules Janin, Paris, 1846.

² *Choix d'Élégies de l'Arioste*, traduites de l'Italien par M. Le Tourneur, Secrétaire ordinaire de Monsieur, frère du Roi, et Censeur Royal, Paris, 1785, 131 pp. (Privil. 12 décembre 1784.)

“Io son di vera fede immobil cote
 Che'l vento indarno, indarno il flusso alterno
 Del pelago d'Amor sempre percuote.

“Né giammai per bonaccia, né per Verno
 Di là, dove il destin mi fermò prima,
 Luogo mutai, ni muterò in eterno.

“Vedrò prima salir verso la cima
 Dell' alpi i fiumi, e s' aprirà il diamante
 Con legno, o piombo, e non con altra lima.

“Che possa il mio destin mover le piante,
 Se non per gire a voi : che possa ingrato
 Sdegno d'Amor rompermi il cor constante.”¹

“Que la roue de la fortune m'élève ou m'a-baisse, que l'amour me sourie ou me dédaigne ; telle que je fus, telle je suis, telle je veux tou-jours être. Constante dans ma foi, je suis l'im-muable rocher que le vent et le flux et reflux de la mer battent sans relâche et toujours en vain. Fixée pour toujours où mes destins m'ont arrê-tée, jamais ni les douceurs du calme, ni les fu-reurs de la tempête ne pourront m'en déplacer. Je verrai les fleuves des Alpes remonter, s'élan-cer vers leur cime et la lime du plomb mordre sur le dur diamant, avant que le sort puisse me forcer à faire un pas qui ne me conduise vers

¹ Ariosto, *Opere Varie*, Paris, 1776, Vol. III. p. 95.

toi, avant que les dédains ingrats de l'amour
brisent la constance de mon cœur fidèle.”¹

The French rendering is tolerably correct and correspondingly colorless. The music and the harmony of the Italian lines are gone, and only the skeleton has been transferred, leaving behind the grace and beauty of the living soul of poetry. It is possible that Le Tourneur was himself conscious of the almost insuperable difficulties of his undertaking, for with the exception of a few sonnets and “Le Cinque Canti,” published in *Le Jardin Anglois*, he gave up further attempts at translating Italian poetry.

For the three remaining years of his life, he devoted himself to the translation of works of travel and adventure. Two of these were accounts of explorations, one in the northern, the other in the southern, sea. The latter is the story of a journey to the Cape of Good Hope and a voyage in the Antarctic Sea, related by André Sparrman, director of the royal cabinet of Natural History at Stockholm.² Sparrman, who,

¹ *Choix d'Élégies de l'Arioste*, p. 16, *Elégie V, La Fidélité.*

² *Voyage au Cap de Bonne Espérance et autour du Monde avec le Capitaine Cook*, par André Sparrman. Traduit par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, 1787, 3 vols. in 8vo.

by his interest in botany, had won the friendship of Linnæus, had, through his friend and cousin, Ekeburg, obtained the nominal position of tutor to the children of an English resident at the Cape. This gave him a long-desired opportunity to investigate the fauna and flora of southern Africa, and, later, to accompany Captain Cook, and Foster the naturalist, in a voyage around the world and in the Antarctic Sea. His journal of these years embodying the results of his investigations, embellished with many plates and maps, was published, first in Swedish, and then in English in 1785.¹ Le Tourneur worked from the English translation,² and his rendering suffers from apparent haste and carelessness. To increase the size of the French edition, he inserted Smeatman's treatise on white ants, in Vol. II.; and in Vol. III. Middleton's essay on the Caffirs. He wrongly states in the preface that Sparrman died in 1778, and the whole translation abounds in inaccuracies. A single amusing example will show him at his worst.

¹ *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, towards the Antarctic Polar Circle and round the World, from 1772-1776, by Andrew Sparrman.* Translated from the Swedish original. London, 1785, 2 vols. in 4.

² Quérard.

On Sparrman's first journey to Falso Bay to meet the resident whose children he was to tutor, he experienced much inconvenience from his lack of knowledge of the Dutch language.

"I had made shift," he says, "to *pick up a little German* in my journey from Gottenburg to the Cape, but this was of very little service, either towards my making myself understood in this place, or towards my understanding a Dutchman in his language." — Vol. I. p. 14.

"Je m'étois attaché avec beaucoup de peine," says Le Tourneur, "un petit Allemand pendant mon voyage de Gottenburg au Cap, mais il m'étoit peu utile, soit pour faire entendre mes idées aux Hollaudais, soit pour m'expliquer les leurs." — Vol. I. p. 9.

In spite of the shortcomings of the translation, the work was well received, and the faithful *Année Littéraire* had still only words of praise for its favorite translator.¹

¹ Tout ce voyage est on ne peut plus intéressant . . . la narration de l'Auteur est enjouée, son style agréable, et n'a sans doute rien perdu en passant par la plume de M. Le Tourneur qui, Traducteur infatigable, consacre ses veilles à enrichir notre langue des bons ouvrages que l'Angleterre a produits." — *Année Littéraire*, August, 1787.

Le Tourneur succeeded better with his selections from Thomas Pennant's *Arctic Zoölogy*.¹ The *Nord du Globe*² is a fairly faithful rendering of the third volume of Pennant's work, although, true to his method, Le Tourneur changes frequently the order of paragraphs, and, in one or two cases, relegates some of the less interesting material to an Appendix. Pennant had originally intended his work as a study of the zoölogy of North America, but, "when the fatal and humiliating hour arrived, which deprived Britain of power, strength, and glory, I felt the mortification which must strike every feeling individual at losing his little share in the boast of ruling over half of the New World. I could no longer support my claim of entitling myself its humble Zoölogist, yet unwilling to fling away all my labors, do now deliver them to the Public under the title of *Arctic Zoölogy*."³ Accordingly, Pennant added a study of the

¹ *Introduction to Arctic Zoölogy* by Thomas Pennant, London, 1784, 1792, 3 vols. in 4to.

² *Le Nord du Globe*, traduit de l'anglois de M. Pennant, Paris, 1789, 2 vols. in 8vo. (Privil. 2 janvier 1788, approb. 11 novembre 1788.) Translation attributed to Le Tourneur by Quérard, Barbier, *Biog. Univ.*

³ Preface to Vol. I.

fauna and flora of most of the countries of northern Europe, and his work was much esteemed, not only by naturalists for its accurate observations and descriptions of hitherto unknown plants and animals, but by the general public for the intrinsic interest of the subject and the easy and pleasant style. In a preface full of good sense and keen appreciation of the value of Pennant's work,¹ Le Tourneur makes an interesting digression to discuss the difference in meaning in French and English of the word *adventurer*, the ignoble significance of which, in his own tongue, he considers a matter for sincere regret. Travellers' tales, in general, he declares, lack literary distinction, because the writers are usually more interested in action than in observation. In its exception to this rule lies the value and interest of the *Arctic Zoölogy*; for its author is not only an explorer and a naturalist, but a writer and an artist. "Cette description est riche, savante, animée,

¹ Thomas Pennant (1726–1798) was the author of many other works on natural history. He visited Europe in 1765, saw Voltaire at Ferney, and was the guest of Buffon at Montbard in Burgundy. Buffon is said (Cuvier in *Biog. Univ.*) to have profited by Pennant's *History of Quadrupeds*, 1781.

et présentée de manière à satisfaire le goût autant que la curiosité."

The first two volumes of the *Arctic Zoölogy* are merely manuals of natural history, consisting chiefly of plates, with accompanying descriptions, so that the third volume alone, which Le Tourneur translated, presents material likely to be of interest to the general public. The style is agreeable, the subject unusual and interesting, and apart from Le Tourneur's little additions,¹ which give a personal touch to the coldly scientific narrative, the reader of the French translation is faithfully conducted to the islands of Scotland, Iceland, Spitzbergen, Kamschatka, and North America, and may gaze with Pennant's keen, observant eyes upon a world probably but little, if at all, known to him.²

¹ After an introduction emphasizing the value of the study of physical geography and natural history, Pennant begins, "Let me take my departure northward from the narrow straits of Dover." Le Tourneur, to avoid the abrupt transition, renders, "*Pleins de ces vues, aussi grandes qu'utiles, et guidés par le flambeau de l'observation et de l'expérience*, prenons notre route vers le Nord, en partant du très resserré détroit de Douvres." — p. 5.

² An idea of Pennant's style in French and English may be seen from the following passages, describing a cavern in Scotland :

Two translations of German works occupied
the last years of Le Tourneur's life: Riesbeck's

"The cavern called the Greylit-pot almost realizes in form a fable in the Persian Tales. The hardy adventurer may make a long subterranean voyage with a picturesque scenery of rock above and on every side. He may be rowed in this solemn scene till he finds himself suddenly restored to the sight of the heavens; he finds himself in a circular chasm open to the day, with a narrow bottom and extensive top, widening at the margin, to the diameter of 200 feet. On attaining the summit, he finds himself at a distance from the sea, amidst cornfields or verdant pastures, with a fine view of the country, and a gentleman's seat near to the place from which he had emerged. Such may be the amusement of the curious in summer calms! but when the storms are directed from the east, the view from the edge of this hollow is tremendous, for from the height of above 300 feet they may look down on the furious waves, whitened with foam, and swelling from their confined passage."

"La caverne nommée Greylit-pot réalise dans ses formes la fable des Contes Persans. Le curieux hardi peut y faire un long voyage souterrain, ayant à ses côtés et sur sa tête une brillante et pittoresque décoration en rochers. Il peut s'y conduire en bateau à rames, errer au milieu de ces scènes majestueuses et se retrouver, tout à coup, rendu à la lumière des cieux. Il se voit dans un espace circulaire, d'une étroite entrée dont le sommet ouvert au jour, va s'élargissant par degrés jusqu'à un diamètre de 200 pieds. En atteignant le sommet, il se trouve loin de la mer, au milieu de champs couverts de prés, de verts pâturages, avec la vue d'un beau pays, et la maison voisine d'un honnête habitant. Tel est le plaisir dont peut jouir un curieux dans les calmes de l'été, mais quand les orages viennent de la partie de l'est, la vue, plongeant du bord de ce trou, de la hauteur

*Letters on Germany*¹ and the *Memoirs of the Baron de Trenck*. The first is, as in the case of Sparrman, a translation of an English translation, which appeared in 1787,² the original German having been published in 1783.³ Riesbeck's German Letters,⁴ written under the guise of a Frenchman, were immensely popular in their day and are still worth reading for their interesting descriptions of manners and customs, for their keen observation, and for the fire and independence of the author which they reveal, and which atone, in large measure, for d'environ 300 pieds, vous fait frissonner en vous montrant au fond, les vagues furieuses, toutes blanchissantes d'écume, et s'irritant contre le passage qui les resserre." — p. 42.

¹ *Voyage en Allemagne, dans une suite de lettres, par M. le Baron de Riesbeck, traduites de l'Anglois, Paris, 1787, 3 vols. in 8vo.*

This French translation is wrongly given by Quérard as a version of Collini's *Lettres sur les Allemands*. This work, however, was not published till 1790 and the letters date from 1786. Riesbeck's work appeared in German in 1783, and his letters began in 1780. Furthermore, Collini recommends Riesbeck to his friend as a useful book on Germany. — (Letter VI. p. 34.)

² *Travels in Germany, in a Series of Letters, translated by Paul Henry Maty, London, 1787, 3 vols. in 8vo.*

³ *Briefe einer reisenden Franzosen über Deutschland, an seinen Brüder an Paris, Zurich, 1783, 2 vols. in 8vo.*

⁴ Gaspar Riesbeck (1705–1786), writer and traveller. Author of *Briefe über das Mönchswesen, Geschichte der Deutschen*, etc.

the injustice and inaccuracy of some of the statements.¹ In his journey from German to English and from English to French, Riesbeck, although an enthusiastic traveller, comes out somewhat enfeebled, shorn of many of his graces, and with less fire than he began his career. But although more serious and staid in French, he is still an agreeable companion with whom to spend an hour, and, even in a foreign tongue, is able to jest at the expense of the learned men of Vienna.²

“Vienne fourmille de gens de lettres. Si un homme vous accoste, et que vous ne le reconnoisiez pas à ses mains sales pour un peintre, un forgeron ou un cordonnier, à sa livrée pour un

¹ E.g. concerning the Prussian government and the financial system of England.

² There had been two other French translations previous to that of *Le Tourneur*:

a. *Lettres d'un Voyageur françois (le baron de R.) sur l'Allemagne*, enrichies de notes et de corrections par Bertholde Frédéric Haller, patricien de Berne. (Hollande) 1785, in 12mo.

b. *Lettres sur l'Allemagne*, Vienne, 1787, in 12mo. Cited by Barbier, with the following note: “Traduction anonyme et en mauvais françois mais sans retranchements, des vingt-cinq premières lettres de l'ouvrage remarquable publié par le Baron G. de Riesbeck sous le titre de *Briefe einer reisenden Franzosen*,” 1783, 2 vols. in 8vo.

laquais ou à ses beaux habits pour un homme de conséquence, vous pouvez être assuré que vous voyez un homme de lettres ou un tailleur, car à Vienne, je n'ai pas encore appris à distinguer l'un de l'autre."¹—Vol. I. p. 285.

The translation of the life of the brilliant and unfortunate Baron de Trenck² was, however, made directly from the German original.³ As in the case of *Clarissa Harlowe*, the work of Le Tourneur claimed to be a complete translation, supplementing an abridged version by the Baron de Bock which had appeared the year before.⁴

¹ In the absence of access to the English translation, the original German may serve as a basis of comparison :

"Hier wimmelt es von Gelehrten. Wenn dir einer begegnet denn du nicht an seinen schmützigen Händen ansehen kannst, dass er ein Farbe, Schmied, oder Schumacher, oder an der Uniformm dass er ein Laquay, oder am vielen Gold auf den Kleidern dass er ein grossen Herr ist, so kannst du sicher sehen, du hast einen Gelehrten oder einen Schneider vor dir, denn beide Menchenklassen hab ich hier noch nicht recht unterschneiden gelernt."—*Briefe einer reisenden Franzosen*, Vol. I. p. 344.

² *La Vie de Frédéric, baron de Trenck*, traduite de l'Allemand par M. Le Tourneur, Berlin, Paris, 1788, 3 vols. in 8vo.

³ *Frédéric, baron de Trenck : Merkwürdige Lebensgeschichte*, Berlin, 1787, 3 vols. in 8vo.

⁴ *Vie de Frédéric, baron de Trenck*, écrite par lui-même and traduite de l'Allemand en français par M. le Baron de B., . . . (Bock), Metz, 1787.

The thrilling story of the adventures and imprisonment of this German Cellini created a great sensation in Paris. Trenck's¹ name was on every one's lips. A wax figure of him in prison costume and loaded with chains was exhibited in the Palais Royal, and a play in which he figured as the hero was presented at the théâtre d'Audinot.² But in spite of the popularity of the work, the public, always impatient of any tendency to prolixity or repetition, was as well satisfied with the abridged as with the complete translation, and doubted the wisdom of Le Tourneur in attempting to give an entire and complete rendering. "It is often better not to be too faithful in a translation," remarked the *Année Littéraire*, "and even now, many people prefer Prévost's version of *Clarissa Harlowe* to

¹ Frédéric, baron de Trenck (1726–1794), in the service of Frederic II. of Prussia, brought upon himself that monarch's displeasure by his intrigue with the Princess Amélie. Imprisoned for eleven years, first in the fortress of Glatz, then in Magdebourg, he served, after his liberation, Elizabeth of Russia and Maria Theresa of Austria. Retired to Aix-les-Bains, he passed the last years of his life in commerce, literary pursuits, and travel. Wrongly accused of being party to a conspiracy in 1794 he was guillotined July 25, the same day as André Chénier.

² *Le Baron de Trenck, ou le prisonnier prussien*, Arnoult, Paris, 1788.

the fuller and more complete translation of Le Tourneur.”¹

Le Tourneur’s knowledge of German was sufficient to keep him from serious errors in translation, and, as usual, he is faithful in the essential points, inexact and inaccurate in detail of word and phrase. His rendering is very readable, and he has well seized Trenck’s graphic phrasing, while his native sense of logic and clearness preserves the directness, and sometimes refines the occasional exuberance and haphazard style of the impetuous German. Although claiming to present an absolutely complete translation, Le Tourneur nevertheless omits a few passages, either because of their irreligious spirit, or because of their derogatory attitude towards the French.²

¹ *Année Littéraire*, 1788, Vol. IV. p. 227.

² An example of the kind of passage which offended the sensitive Le Tourneur is the following (the omitted portion is in brackets):

“ Ich fand tausend gründe die mich überzeugten, das es nummerro Zeit sei, meinem Leiden ein Ende zu machen. [Und da mich, wie gesagt, niemand gefragt hatte, ob ich in die Welt kommen und gebohren sein wolte, so glaubte ich auch, wolkommen berechtigt zu sein, gleichfalls ohne jemand zu fragen, dieselbe zu verlassen, so bald mein Hiersein unerträglich wurde].” — Vol. II. p. 30.

Trenck's indomitable spirit and sense of humor enabled him to keep up his hope and courage even under the most severe imprisonment. Caught in an attempt to escape from Magdebourg, brought back ignominiously, fettered with still heavier chains, he was submitted to a rough and searching cross-questioning as to where he had obtained his tools. Just as the guards and officers were leaving the dungeon after having vainly examined every corner, Trenck spoke, and his reply is characteristic both of the man and of his style :

“ Messieurs, le diable est mon meilleur ami, il m'apporte tout ce dont j'ai besoin. Nous passons des nuits à jouer au piquet ensemble, et il me fournit de chandelle. Gardez-moi comme vous voudrez, il saura bien me sauver de votre pouvoir.

“ Ils étoient tout stupéfaits, et cependant les autres rioient; enfin quand ils eurent tout examiné avec la plus grande exactitude, et qu'ils eurent fermé la porte, je m'écriai, ‘ Messieurs, revenez, vous avez oublié quelque chose d'important.’

“ En même tems je tirai une des limes que j'avois cachées, et quand ils rentrèrent, je leur

dis : ‘ J'ai voulu seulement vous prouver que le diable m'apporte tout ce dont j'ai besoin.’ On visita de nouveau et on referma. Les quatre serrures n'étoient pas encore fermées, que j'avois déjà retiré un couteau et dix louis d'or.” — Vol. II. p. 140.

“ Meine Herren, der Teufel ist mein bester Freund, er bringt mir alles was ich brauche. Wir spielen auch gänze Nächte Picket mit einander, und er bringt mir auch Licht. Sie mögen mich bewachen wie sie wollen, so wird er mich doch aus ihrer Gewalt erretten.

“ Sie erstaunten ; die andern lachten. Endlich da sie alles auf das genaueste durchgesucht und die letzte Thüre zugeschlossen hatten, rief ich : ‘ Meine Herren ! kehren zie zurück ! Sie haben etwas Wichtiges vergessen !’

“ Indessen zog ich eine versteckte Feile aus dem Boden heraus, und sagte bei ihrem Eintritte , ‘ Ich habe Ihnen nur beweisen wollen, das der Teufel mir alles bringt, was ich bedarf.’ Man visitirte wieder — und schloss zu. Und dess das man an vier Schlössern arbeitete, hatte ich ein Messer, und 10 Louis d'or hervorgesucht, weil ich mein Geld an verschiedenen Oerten

versteckt hatte. Das meiste lag unter dem Boden." — Vol. II. p. 95.)

Le Jardin Anglois,¹ one of the three posthumous works² of Le Tourneur, stands on the border line between his translations and his original composition. The two volumes which compose the "garden" contain a large number of short selections, some of which are translations, and some, original sketches. In this collection are reprinted in complete or abridged form several of his previously published works.³ The hitherto unpublished translations and sketches include such varied subjects as an essay on Shenstone, a sketch of the history of ballooning, the description of two famous criminals, reflections upon capital punishment, and the account of a trip to Normandy. The most noteworthy translations are those of four episodes

¹ *Le Jardin Anglois, ou Variétés tant originales que traduites par feu M. Le Tourneur.* Londres et Paris, 1788, 2 vols. in 8vo.

² *Mémoirs Intéressans*, par Une Lady, 1788 ; *Le Jardin Anglois*, 1788 ; *Le Nord du Globe*, 1789.

³ Such are : *Discours Moraux, Eloge de Clairaut et de du Muy*, *La Jeune Fille séduite*, one of the *Lettres Angloises*, a poem of Ossian (*Cathuélina*), an episode omitted from *Le Sylphe*, several of Ariosto's elegies, and an extract from *Le Nord du Globe*.

from Thomson's *Seasons*, a few extracts from the first and third cantos of *Paradise Lost*, half a dozen of Shakespeare's sonnets, and seven satires, and the *Cinque Canti* of Ariosto.

The work, as a whole, offers nothing remarkable either in intrinsic interest or in literary value. A compilation of a heterogeneous mass of material, it is one of those collections due to the zeal of friends who wish to publish everything that ever came from their author's pen. In this case, such often misdirected effort was without effect. Le Tourneur's *Le Jardin Anglois* has quietly gone the way of most of his other works and is now of value chiefly for the sake of the biographical sketch which serves as preface.

Of the dozen translations which occupied the later years of Le Tourneur's life, *Clarissa Harlowe* is the most important and the best known. A few of the others, notably *The Sylph*, the *Life of Trench*, and the *Letters of Riesbeck*, are still worth reading. The rest, except for their interest in the study of literary development, hardly deserve a different fate from the oblivion into which they have fallen. Nevertheless, at the time of their production, they

served their purpose well, of increasing literary cosmopolitanism in France; and viewed in this light, these minor translations of Le Tourneur have an appreciable interest and value.

V. THE TRANSLATOR OF SHAKESPEARE

THE conservatism of French taste and the slow growth of literary cosmopolitanism in France are nowhere more clearly shown than in the appreciation of Shakespeare. For over a hundred years after his death, the English poet was almost unknown in France, and a hundred and sixty passed before the appearance of a complete translation of his works. Le Tourneur's translation, the first volumes of which appeared in 1776, occupies a unique position, not only by reason of the curious literary warfare which it excited, but also because it marked the beginning of a new and distinct epoch in the development of dramatic taste. A brief consideration of the appreciation of Shakespeare previous to the appearance of this work will indicate the importance of the part played by Le Tourneur in the literary revolution which

took place at the close of the eighteenth century.

In France, in the seventeenth century, English was as little known and studied as Chinese is to-day. The knowledge of English literature was confined to a few travellers and playwrights, and these were men like St. Evrémond and La Fosse, who had lived in England and had become acquainted with its drama as much by accident as by design. Throughout the entire hundred years, only a few scattered references to Shakespeare are to be found, slight and unimportant notices of him, destined to be forgotten as soon as made. Yet, significantly enough, his works formed a part of the libraries of two of the most eminent men of whom the century could boast: the king, Louis XIV. and his great minister, Fouquet.¹ The word of comment by Nicholas Clément, the royal librarian, in his catalogue of books which was finished in 1684, represents, not only the first written appreciation of Shakespeare in France, but expresses, in its

¹ For a detailed account of Shakespeare in France, see *Shakespeare in France under the Old Régime*, by J. J. Jusserand, London, 1899, and *L'Influence de Shakespeare sur le Théâtre Français*, par Albert Lacroix, Bruxelles, 1866.

essence, the general feeling about him which was to persist until well into the nineteenth century.

“Ce poète anglois a l'imagination assez belle, il pense naturellement, il s'exprime avec finesse; mais ces belles qualités sont obscurcies par les ordures qu'il mêle dans ses comédies.”¹

But with the opening of the new century, the wave of cosmopolitanism, of interest in England and English literature, which was a little later to sweep over France with irresistible force, began to make itself felt. The study of English became more common. Numerous translations appeared, and French versions of Milton, Pope, Swift, Addison, and Defoe aroused interest in foreign literature, stimulated curiosity, and provoked criticism. Guide-books, essays, descriptions of England multiplied, and a trip across the Channel became part of a liberal education.

It was Destouches who made the first attempt to translate Shakespeare into French. He went to London in 1717 and spent six years in England. There he made a study of the English drama. He saw the *Tempest*, and was so im-

¹ Cited by Jusserand, *Shakespeare in France*, London, 1899, p. 171.

pressed by its strangeness and beauty that he rendered several scenes from it into French verse. In his own plays, notably *Le Dissipateur*¹ (1738), he showed traces of the influence of the English stage, and in the dedicatory letter which preceded his translations from the *Tempest* he spoke boldly and appreciatively of Shakespeare's method and the freedom of the English drama.² Curiously enough, he seemed to be content with these fragments, for he made no further trans-

¹ An echo of Timon of Athens in the conception of certain scenes and in its mingling of comic and serious.

² "Ces scènes si intéressantes, si naïves et d'un goût si singulier et si touchant, sont extraites d'une comédie intitulée, *La Tempête*, pièce toujours très suivie en Angleterre quoiqu'il s'en faille infinitimement qu'elle soit régulière ; mais en ce pays-là l'irrégularité n'est qu'une perfection.

"L'argument tient fort du merveilleux et encore plus du bizarre. C'est d'une magie perpétuelle. Et quels incidents ne peut-on pas amener par la force de la magie ! Que nous serions heureux en ce pays-ci, nous autres auteurs comiques, si on vouloit nous permettre de nous servir d'un art si commode ! que de belles choses ne ferions nous point ? . . . Mais dès que nous voulons prendre notre imagination pour modèle, on nous siffle impitoyablement et franchement, cela est fort incommodé et fort malhonnête. Mais c'est le goût de la nation. Jugez comment elle auroit reçu la pièce dont voici le sujet !"—*Oeuvres*, Paris, 1822, Tome V. p. 498 (Scènes anglaises).

The translation of Destouches was made from the *Tempest* of Dryden and Davenant.

lations or other attempts to make his discovery of Shakespeare more generally known.

Destouches's criticism is significant, for he represents one of the first of the eighteenth-century school of reaction against the canons of the French classic drama. About the same time Houdard de la Motte felt and expressed the need of reform in the national drama, and advised such radical changes as the abolition of the monologue and the *confidant*, the suppression of long and useless *récits*, and the preservation of one only of the three unities, that of interest.¹ These protests were the revival of the old quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, begun as far back as the time of Alexander Hardy, lulled to rest by the superb work of Corneille, Racine, and Molière, and now, before the mediocre drama of their successors and imitators, breaking out afresh with renewed force and power. Houdard de la Motte, however, was not great enough, either as a man or as a dramatist, to carry out his reforms in a large and poetic manner or to impose them upon a public, weary indeed of the

¹ Houdard de la Motte, *Oeuvres*, Paris, 1754, Vol. IV.; *Discours sur la Tragédie à l'occasion des Machabées*; *Discours sur la Tragédie à l'occasion de Romule, d'Inès*.

old forms, but too conservative readily to adopt the new. His attempts at dramatic reform, moreover, were promptly crushed by Voltaire, who, in his preface to *Œdipe* in 1729, defended the cause of the sacred unities and cleverly demolished the arguments of Houdard de la Motte. To Voltaire himself, as he often boasted, belongs the honor of having made the name of Shakespeare familiar to France. During his three years' residence in England he became acquainted with the English drama and witnessed performances of some of Shakespeare's plays. He was much impressed and greatly interested by what he saw and learned of the English poet, and his own dramatic work for the next ten years showed undoubted traces of the influence of Shakespeare. But Voltaire did more than imitate and adapt Shakespeare. He translated a few passages, and hastened to call the attention of France and French dramatists to his strange and wonderful discovery. He was at once attracted and repelled by Shakespeare. Profoundly impressed as he was by his genius and power, shocked by his disregard of the unities, by his mingling of the comic and the tragic, by his scenes of violence and by his

grossness, Voltaire's judgment of him was that of a conservative born and bred in the worship of French classic tragedy as the most perfect standard of excellence. His first feeling was not unlike that of Nicholas Clément nearly fifty years before:

“ Il avait un génie plein de force et de fécondité, de naturel et de sublime, sans la moindre étincelle de bon goût et sans la moindre connaissance des règles.”¹ After the first feeling of astonishment came the keen and appreciative judgment which Voltaire manifested throughout, until the fatal moment when he thought he saw himself dethroned by the very man he had patronized and befriended.

“ Le génie poétique des Anglais ressemble jusqu'à présent à un arbre touffu planté par la nature, jetant au hasard ses mille rameaux, et croissant inégalement avec force. Il meurt si vous voulez forcer sa nature et le tailler en arbre des jardins de Marly.”²

This was the opinion to which, in the famous *Lettres Philosophiques*, in the prefaces to his

¹ *Lettres Philosophiques: Lettre sur La Tragédie*, Paris, 1734.

² *Ibid.*

plays, in almost everything he said and wrote, Voltaire gave utterance in his honest and impartial judgment of Shakespeare, before he became blinded by fear, jealousy, and passion.¹

Encouraged by Voltaire, the literary world of France hastened to extend its knowledge of English literature in general, and of Shakespeare in particular. In 1730 Montesquieu, travelling in England, wrote that he had conversed with the queen concerning Shakespeare and the English theatre, and noted the difference between the two dramatic systems.²

Anglomania was rapidly gaining ground in France. In the ridicule cast upon it in a comedy called *La Frivolité* Voltaire might have seen a shadow of the coming storm.

¹ For the whole subject of Shakespeare and Voltaire, see *Voltaire and Shakespeare*, Thomas Lounsbury, London, 1902; *Shakespeare in France*, J. J. Jusserand, London, 1899; *L'Influence de Shakespeare sur le Théâtre Français*, Albert Lacroix, Bruxelles, 1856.

² "Les Anglois sont des génies singuliers, ils n'imiteront pas les anciens qu'ils admirent. Leurs pièces ressemblent bien moins même à des productions régulières de la nature, qu'à ces jeux dans lesquels elle a suivi des hasards heureux." — *Pensées diverses Œuvres*, Paris, 1819, Vol. VII. pp. 265-279.

“Son transport l'autre jour, étoit l'anglomanie.
Rien, sans l'habit anglois, ne pouvoit réussir;
Au-dessus de Corneille, il mettoit Sakespir.”¹

A little later, in 1738, the Abbé Prévost, who had already visited England, devoted entire numbers of his periodical, *Le Pour et le Contre*, to Shakespeare. He gave analyses of several plays: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and declared boldly that these dramas were all the better for not having preserved the unities or followed the ancients. Other eminent men began to busy themselves with Shakespeare, and Riccoboni's account,² and the letters of the Abbé Le Blanc,³ help to swell the testimony to the increased interest in the English poet. But, as yet, no translation existed. Every one talked about him, but no one knew him except by hearsay or from reading the few scenes rendered by Destouches and Voltaire. Every one had ideas. Very few had any actual knowledge. Yet it

¹ Cited by Hippolyte Lucas in his *Histoire du Théâtre Français*, Paris, 1862, p. 56, Vol. II. *La Frivolité*, comédie en un acte et en vers par M. Boissy, Paris, 1753. The lines are spoken by M. Fauster, *Suisse*, Scene 4, p. 28.

² *Réflexions Historiques et Critiques sur les Différens Théâtres de l'Europe*, Louis Riccoboni, Paris, 1738, in 8vo.

³ *Lettres d'un François*, La Haye, 1745, 3 vols.

was not till 1745 that the necessity or desirability of any kind of a translation, by means of which one might get at least a second-hand acquaintance with Shakespeare, seemed to be felt. In that year, however, as the result of the audacious idea of a French version of some of his plays, Antoine de La Place published a *Théâtre Anglois*, four volumes of which were devoted to the plays of Shakespeare.¹ Thus, a hundred and fifty years had passed since the time that Shakespeare wrote, before any attempt was made to translate his works into French, and the ignorance concerning him during this century and a half was almost boundless.

In England, on the other hand, there was a fair acquaintance with the dramatic literature of France.² The plays of Corneille were translated and acted, especially *Le Cid*, which was performed before Charles I. and Henrietta in 1637. Molière and Racine, though less well known, were yet sufficiently popular. *Le Tartuffe* was played at Drury Lane in 1670, and

¹ *Le Théâtre Anglois* (Pierre Antoine de La Place), Paris et Londres, 1745, 8 vols.

² See *Corneille and Racine in England*, by Dorothea F. Canfield, New York, 1904.

Andromaque, under the title of the *Distressed Mother*, was performed in 1712.

The late growth and slow development of the knowledge and appreciation of English literature in France up to the middle of the eighteenth century is, at first sight, surprising, but a closer examination of existing conditions suggests at least a few of the underlying causes. Among these may be noted the late development of the French drama, the conservatism of the people, and the difficulties of adequate and accurate translation. The first two of these are natural and obvious. As the golden age of French drama was a century later than that of England, it was inevitable that dramatic criticism should also be a century behind, and that not until the French drama reached a position of influence and power could dramatic appreciation be other than feeble. The reaction towards culture and refinement after the intestine and foreign wars of the sixteenth century increased the natural conservatism of the people, by concentrating their interest upon the development of French literature, and thus delayed their reaching out after a knowledge of English drama. Furthermore, whatever curiosity existed about foreign

literature was fully satisfied, at least for a time, by an acquaintance with the drama of Italy and Spain. By this the French were profoundly and not unwillingly influenced, for, after all, these countries had the same racial characteristics as themselves, while the English were then, as ever, irremediably and hopelessly alien.

But by far the greatest and most important obstacle to the early and rapid development of the appreciation of English literature was the difficulty of translation, a difficulty so great as to be almost insurmountable, and which, even at the present day, hampers the entire comprehension of the one nation by the other. It is the difficulty of translating a Teutonic tongue into a Latin, where the turn of the phrase, the words, the sounds, are entirely different. A literal translation is a sacrilege; a paraphrase, an untruth. One has only to glance at these early attempts to translate Shakespeare into equivalent French to be convinced of the inadequacy of the French tongue to express the conceptions of the Teutonic mind. It is the difficulty experienced by a nation of the South when striving to understand a nation of the North. France, by her proximity to Italy, received the impress

of its passionate expression, its susceptibility to beauty in sound, in light, in color. England, like other northern nations, compressed its passion, no less intense, into fewer words, and found a beauty no less noble, in the more subdued coloring of its northern landscapes. Thus it is that by reason of subtle differences in temperament, surroundings, and training, many phases and sentiments of the English mind have no equivalent in the French tongue, and an accurate translation becomes well-nigh impossible. This is particularly true of a translation of poetry. Philarète Chasles puts the truth quaintly when he says :

“ Le plupart des traducteurs ont fait parler à Shakespeare une prose faible, bizarre, souvent inintelligible, puis, appelant ce Shakespeare ainsi accoutré à la barre de leur tribunal, ils l'ont condamné gravement et sans appel. Hélas ! ce n'est plus Shakespeare, c'est le critique et sa prose.”¹

These causes explain, in part, the late introduction of Shakespeare into France, and the first translation fully justifies the criticism of Chasles. La Place translated ten of the plays,

¹ *Etudes sur Shakespeare*, Paris, 1851, p. 340.

and gave outlines of the others.¹ He adhered strictly to his motto, "non verbum rendere verbo," and the result is a curious mixture of prose and verse. In his so-called translations, he frequently omits whole scenes, gives merely an analysis of others, and passes over important passages, the loss of which distorts the thought and often changes the meaning. Still, he brought to his task sincerity and ardor, and his work marks the first actual introduction of Shakespeare into France. But even more important than his translation, from which might be gained an idea, however incomplete, of the plays of Shakespeare, was the *Discours sur le Théâtre Anglois*, which La Place inserted in his first volume by way of introduction, and in which he spoke of Shakespeare with unusual justice and appreciation. He found encouragement, he said, in the increased interest in France in English literature, and was aware that in a study of the English drama it was necessary to begin with Shakespeare.

"J'ai lu et médité avec attention ses œuvres,

¹ The plays translated were *Othello*, *Henry VI.*, *Richard III.*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

et j'ai senti qu'en les faisant connoître, je diminuerois peut-être la réputation de cet auteur si l'on ne remarque que ses négligences et ses défauts, sans avoir égard à la différence des temps, des mœurs et des usages, si l'on ne veut le juger que d'après la Poétique d'Aristote ; si le sublime des idées, la grandeur des images, le feu de l'enthousiasme, la singularité des traits nouveaux et hardis, le naturel des sentiments, disparaissent aux yeux des lecteurs déjà fatigués par des scènes hors d'œuvre, choqués souvent par le manque de vraisemblance, et quelquefois ennuyés par des détails déplacés. . . . Il importe peu que Shakespeare ait travaillé dans un goût différent du nôtre, cette raison même doit redoubler notre curiosité . . . un pareil examen ne peut que tendre à la perfection de l'art. . . . L'esprit françois ne doit pas être nécessairement celui de toutes les nations et dans la lecture de Shakespeare, non seulement on trouvera la différence du génie anglois et du génie françois mais on y verra des traits de force, des beautés neuves et originales."

This was vigorous language, but La Place went even further, and justified Shakespeare in his disregard of the unities and in his scenes of

violence. But he did more than this. Not content with declaring his beauties, he defended him fearlessly from the attacks of the critics. Although the first volume of the translation was cordially received, yet the sensitive taste of the French was offended by Shakespeare's scenes of bloodshed, his changes of place and scene, and by his variations of style to suit the character of the personages upon the stage. To these charges La Place replied with a prophetic breadth of view which was characteristic of the man :

“Ces libertés, qui feront de Shakespeare l'objet de la critique des François, ne paroissent pas contraires aux lois de la nature et de la raison, ni à cette vérité de sentiment qui les rassemble toutes. Gardons nous donc de condamner sans retour aujourd'hui ce que nos neveux applaudiront peut-être un jour.”

This attempt of La Place to familiarize the French people with the plays of Shakespeare met with great success. The two volumes which he had intended to devote to the English poet had to be increased to four, and in the selection of the plays translated can be seen his desire to give an idea of Shakespeare's varied range of

subject.¹ Although very mediocre as a translation the work marks an important epoch in the history of French dramatic taste. Its value lies not in its intrinsic merit, but in what it was able to accomplish. A great diffusion of the knowledge of Shakespeare, an easy means for those ignorant of English to study him, a storehouse of new and much-needed elements for dramatic reform, a distinct addition to literature—these are some of the results of the translation of La Place.

The efforts of La Place were directly and ably seconded by Ducis some twenty years later. Meanwhile, various innovations, modifications, and experiments among French dramatists testified to the growing power and influence of the English stage. Two years after the translations of La Place appeared the *François II.* of Président Hénault, a direct and avowed imitation of Shakespeare's historical dramas. The rise of the "comédie larmoyante" (1725–1740) and individual efforts, such as Du Belloy's *Siège de Calais* (1765), Mercier's *Essay on Dramatic Art* (1773), and above all, Voltaire's emphatic utter-

¹ *Cymbeline*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*.

ances in 1760 in the first heat of his reaction against Shakespeare, did much to stimulate and increase interest in the English dramatist.

The work of Ducis consisted, not in translation, but in imitation and adaptation. He knew no English, but through the interpretation of La Place became fired with a life-long admiration and hero-worship of Shakespeare. His aim was to unite the dramatic system of Voltaire with Shakespearian subjects, and to adapt the plays of the English dramatist to the French stage. With the translation of La Place as his source of material, and a picture of Shakespeare and one of Garrick as his inspiration before him as he wrote, he set to work, as reverently, to use his own expression, as if he were laboring at an altarpiece.¹ His good-will, sincerity, enthusiasm, and industry were boundless; his poetic and dramatic talent unfortunately small. His first trial was *Hamlet*, which was published in 1769. It is a curious mixture of Shakespeare and Ducis. Of Shakespeare's characters, Ducis retains only five: Hamlet, Claudius, Polonius, Gertrude, and Ophelia. A confidant is introduced for Hamlet, and another for Gertrude. Ophelia is made the

¹ Letter to Garrick, April 14, 1769.

daughter of Claudius, and the whole play turns upon the plots of Claudius to dethrone Hamlet.¹

Thus transformed, the play had a great success on the French stage, and Ducis, encouraged by popular favor, ventured to try his skill still further. In 1772 he produced *Romeo and Juliet*, a drama which had little in common with Shakespeare but the name and the rivalry between the houses of Capulet and Montague.² *King Lear* (1783), *Macbeth* (1784), *King John* (1791), and *Othello* (1792) testified to the favor with which these pale and colorless reflections of Shakespeare were received. Ducis was himself conscious of the immense difficulty of his undertaking, and his timidity is almost ludicrous in contrast to the sincerity and earnestness of his desire to introduce Shakespeare into France.

¹ "Oui, cher Polonius, tout mon parti n'aspire
En détrônant Hamlet, qu'à m'assurer l'empire."

— *Hamlet*, Act I. Scene 1. Ducis, *Oeuvres*, Vol. I. Paris, 1819.

² Romeo, after the defeat and proscription of his father, has been brought up from childhood in the house of the Capulets, who are ignorant of his name. Finally, Montague appears, and the play turns on the quarrel of the two men, and Romeo's struggle between his love for Juliet and his duty to his father.

He recognized his worth, but dared not risk the unpopularity which an exact reproduction might bring upon the imitator and his author. He stood, as it were, with Shakespeare on the threshold of the French stage, timid and hesitating, uncertain whether or not to lead him through the portal, and finally compromising between his fear and his desire, by making Shakespeare keep silent, and by interpreting, in his own way, the words of the wild and uncouth stranger. Although his imitations often failed to convey the meaning of Shakespeare, yet they gave some idea of his personality and power, and did much to familiarize the people with the English dramatist.

Enthusiasm and interest were further increased by Sébastien Mercier in his *Essai sur l'Art Dramatique*¹ and his attempted reforms in *Les Tombeaux de Vérone* (1774), and by Marmontel's *Discours sur la Poésie Dramatique*,² by Bacular d'Arnaud's *discours* and his translation of a scene from *Richard III*. (Act V.

¹ *Du Théâtre, ou, Nouvel Essai sur l'Art Dramatique*, par M. Mercier, Amsterdam, 1773.

² *Chefs d'Œuvre Dramatiques, ou, Recueil des Meilleures Pièces du Théâtre François*, par M. Marmontel, Paris, 1773. *Discours sur la Tragédie*.

Scene 5),¹ and by Douin's translation of *Othello*.² England and English literature became the height of fashion. Not only France, but all Europe, had already gone into ecstasies over Young's *Night Thoughts* and Hervey's *Meditations on the Tombs*. The slow but irresistible advance of the change of taste which was to revolutionize European literature and criticism had begun. People were eager for something new. The *wanderlust* was felt in literature. With the enjoyment of melancholy came the delight in the mysterious, the unknown, the incomprehensible. Shakespeare was welcomed for his very novelty and strangeness. To talk of him was the fashion, to read him in the mutilated and modified versions of La Place and Ducis was interesting, and gave a desire for more. One held one's breath, astonished, marveling at his power, his audacity, his beauty, moved by his tragedy and pathos, shocked at his irregularities and grossness. Acquaintance with him had the charm of novelty, the flavor of forbidden fruit; it gave the delicious thrill of

¹ D'Arnaud, Bacular, *Oeuvres complètes*, Amsterdam, 1775, 5 vols. Vol. II. p. 28 et seq. *Discours Préliminaire* to *Les Amans Malheureux*.

² *Le More de Venise*, traduit par M. Douin, Paris, 1773.

watching a skilful acrobat, of listening to a half-comprehended, pleasantly shocking tale. If this were the effect of a slight and imperfect knowledge, how much more enjoyable would be a thorough and intimate acquaintance! The supreme moment had come in the history of French dramatic taste and criticism. The time was ripe for the appearance of a complete translation of Shakespeare.

To Pierre Le Tourneur belongs the honor of having conceived and carried out this great and important work, which was destined to engage the whole literary world in warfare, and to change the entire current of literary thought. As early as 1770 he had had the idea in mind, and in the preface to his translation of Young¹ had spoken of Shakespeare with justice and appreciation, and had stated his intention to translate his entire works. The time had now come for the fulfilment of his promise, and in March, 1776, appeared the first two volumes of the first complete translation of Shakespeare into French.² The work was sold by subscrip-

¹ *Oeuvres diverses d'Young*, traduites par Le Tourneur, Paris, 1770.

² *Shakespeare*, traduit de l'Anglois, dédié au Roi, Paris, 1776-1783, 20 vols. 8vo.

tion, dedicated to the king, and completed, in twenty handsome octavo volumes, in 1783. It was to be illustrated by engravings by Moreau, and no pains were to be spared to make the edition a complete and handsome one. The plan for the series of engravings unfortunately fell through, but in other respects the edition carried out the promise of the prospectus. These first two volumes contained, besides much introductory matter, translations of *Othello*, *The Tempest*, and *Julius Cæsar*. They were greeted with enthusiasm by the public, already warmly appreciative of Le Tourneur's renderings of Young and Hervey, and ready to welcome any new translation from his pen.¹ They aroused a violent storm of criticism and protest from Voltaire and his friends, who saw in them not only an attack upon the sacred temple of French classic drama, but also a deplorable lack of taste on the part of the translators, in ignoring the work of the greatest living dramatist of

¹ "M. Le Tourneur fait espérer une Traduction du Théâtre entier de Shakespeare, le Public le recevra sans doute avec applaudissement, mais on attend avec plus d'impatience encore les Écrits originaux d'une plume comme la sienne." — *Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, La Haye, 1771, Vol. XXXV. p. 363.

France. Before taking up the details of this literary quarrel, it will perhaps be of service, in trying to understand it, to examine the introductory matter of the first volume, which, even more than the translation itself, lashed Voltaire to ungovernable fury.

In the work of these first two volumes, Le Tourneur was aided by the Comte de Catuélan and Fontaine-Malherbe,¹ but for the remainder of the work he was alone responsible.² The first volume contained a list of over eight hundred subscribers for more than twelve hundred copies. The list was headed by the king and queen and other members of the royal family, the King of England, the Prince of Wales, and the "Empress of all the Russias." Then came a glittering array of princes, dukes, and many members of the nobility; of ministers of state and ambassadors, the official representatives of foreign powers, officers of the army and navy, professors, physicians, judges, merchants, the Archbishop of

¹ Fontaine-Malherbe, Jean (1740–1780), poet and dramatist, author of *La Rapidité de la Vie* (1766), *Épître aux Pauvres, Argillan, ou le Fanatisme des Croisades* (1769), *L'École des Pères*, *Le Cadet de Famille*, etc.

² *Journal des Savants*, June, 1779. Preface to Vol. VIII. of Le Tourneur's translation.

Canterbury, and the University of Cambridge, the celebrated actors Garrick and Henderson, and, curiously enough, Voltaire's friend, le Comte d'Argental. About a fourth of the subscribers were English, but they came also from Lisbon, Madrid, Florence, Vienna, Amsterdam, and even "North America."¹ This imposing list was followed by a dedicatory letter to the king, in which the translators enlarged upon the genius of Shakespeare with a justice and enthusiasm which had hitherto been rare. No man of genius, they declared, had ever penetrated more deeply into the recesses of the human heart, none had more powerfully given the language of nature to the expression of human passions.

Like Nature herself, Shakespeare gives to his personages the same astonishing variety of character that Nature bestows upon the individuals she creates. With her as his only model and sole teacher, he has learned the great secret of dramatic art; that is, to conceive characters for the stage as lifelike as those created by Nature

¹ "M. Dobby Esq., North America; M. Lother Esq., North America; M. Lottin Esq., North America; M. Lowart, Esq., North America."

herself. Never yet has this great man been shown to France in his true glory. He has hitherto appeared to a rival nation of superb taste in a kind of ridiculous travesty which disfigured his beautiful proportions. Now, freed from the false jewels which had been substituted for his true richness, and from the mask which, while concealing the animated expression of his features, presented nothing of him but a dull and lifeless countenance, he will appear with all his imperfections and in his natural greatness. The reader will not only find here, scenes of nobility and grandeur, but will observe that Shakespeare, descending into the cabin of the poor, saw humanity there, and did not disdain to paint it in the lower classes. He seized upon nature wherever he found it, and developed the recesses of the human heart without departing from the ordinary scenes of life. Shall then philosophers and men of letters refuse to read or to applaud ? No ! for the great sovereign of France himself deigns to visit and to interest himself in the humblest of his subjects. No ! a thousand times no ! It is barbarous to think that half of the human race should be vile outcasts unworthy of the brush of genius

and given over to its scorn. The time has passed when France admired only the fruits of her own genius and looked with disdain upon the work of other nations. Now Shakespeare can appear with confidence in the country of Corneille, Racine, and Molière, and demand from the French people the tribute of glory which every nation owes to genius, and which he would have received from these great men if he had been known to them.

After this enthusiastic and alas ! too confident epistle came several pages devoted to the refutation of certain statements concerning Shakespeare, which Marmontel had carelessly and imprudently made in the introductory discourse to a recent edition of dramatic masterpieces. Le Tourneur showed the absurdity of Marmontel's remarks and declared with some warmth that he failed to see what warrant that author could have had for making them, adding, with an asperity unusual in him, that if Marmontel had had a better knowledge of the English and had read the drama of their beloved poet, he would have doubtless judged it more favorably and more justly. The statements were inaccurate and foolish in the extreme, and by the time Le

Tourneur had finished with them, Marmontel had not, so to speak, a leg left to stand on.¹

After demolishing Marmontel's arguments

¹ 1°. Page xxxvi. Que lorsque l'Espagne avoit Lopez de Vega Shakespeare, au commencement du dix-septième siècle, fit paroître la Tragédie sur le Théâtre de Londres, et qu'il paroît avoir eu connaissance du Théâtre Espagnol.

2°. Page xxxiv. Que les Anglois prirent le goût de la décence de la belle nature en France, à la cour de Louis le Grand, que ce fut à Molière à Racine, à Despréaux, qu'ils durent Wicherly, Congreve, Rochester, Dryden, etc., et que tandis qu'à la lecture, les Poètes du second âge charmaient la Cour de Charles II., et que la partie la plus cultivée de la Nation, d'accord avec toute l'Europe, admiroit le Comique ingénieux et décent de Congreve, l'ancien goût, le goût populaire n'applaudissoit sur les Théâtres qu'un comique grossier, obscène, un Tragique aussi peu décent.

3°. Page xxviii. Que quoique Shakespeare soit encore le Maître du Théâtre, et presque le seul qu'on y applaudisse avec transport, on peut prédire que jamais sa manière ne sera sincèrement goûtée en Angleterre que par le peuple.

4°. Page xxxviii. Qu'on abrège tous les jours Shakespeare ; qu'on le châtie, que le célèbre Garrick vient de risquer tout nouvellement sur son Théâtre de retrancher de la Tragédie d'Hamlet la scène des Fossoyeurs et presque tout le cinquième Acte ; et que la pièce et l'auteur n'en ont été que plus applaudis.

5°. Page xxxiii. Que les Anglois sont un peuple peu sensible aux plaisirs de l'imagination.

6°. Page xxxvii. Que Shakespeare n'a jamais connu cette pitié douce qui pénètre insensiblement, qui se saisit des cœurs et qui, les pressant par degrés, leur fait goûter le plaisir si doux de se soulager par des larmes.— *Chefs d'Œuvre Dramatiques*, Paris, 1773.

Le Tourneur proceeded to an enthusiastic description of the Shakespeare Jubilee, celebrated in Stratford in 1769. In the closing paragraphs he said, with much truth, that before declaring that the English have made too much of Shakespeare, and are still blindly worshiping him, it would be well for the French to know and understand him.¹ After all, he concluded, what true talent needs, is not so much favor as simple justice.

The account of the Jubilee was followed by a life of Shakespeare written with sympathy and discrimination. Le Tourneur's appreciations of Shakespeare in the concluding paragraphs are marked by a justice and by a boldness and indifference to tradition, well calculated to scandalize the conservative worshipers of French classic models.

¹ "Avant de le juger lui-même, tâchons d'attendre à le connoître, nous, dont une ardeur pré-naturée précipite et égare quelquefois les jugemens ; nous, qu'un premier pas heureux dans la carrière enivre et transporte jusqu'au délire pour l'idole du jour, qui proclamons sans pudeur du nom de grand Poète, de grand acteur, des enfans à peine sortis du berceau de leur art ; et qui, bientôt, aussi cruels dans nos dégoûts, qu'insensés dans nos caprices, renversons, foulons aux pieds sans pitié l'objet de notre admiration éphémère, étouffant ainsi le talent, tantôt dans des flots d'encens, tantôt sous la verge impitoyable du mépris." — Vol. I. p. xxxiv.

At a time, he says, when the Italians, corrupted by bad taste, were listening to childish conceits and disdaining everything natural, when France still enjoyed scandalous mystery plays and farces, Shakespeare appeared, and revived in England the art of Plautus and Sophocles, which had been dead two thousand years. Rather, he created it, and it merited the name of the art of Shakespeare as well as the art of Sophocles.¹ The study of the models which we have corrupts and alters in us the originality of nature. Unconsciously we copy their mannerisms and defects, and like magicians in a fairy tale they transform us before we are aware. One reason of Shakespeare's greatness is, that he came first, was hampered by no rules, bound by the

¹ "Créateur de ce genre nouveau, il sentit qu'il avoit le droit d'agir en maître, et rejetta toutes les loix qui ne s'accordaient pas avec ses grandes vues et ses vastes plans. Peintre de l'humanité, il embrassa tout le genre humain. Il vit que les dernières classes de la société pouvoient aussi bien que les plus élevées lui fournir une foule de personnages intéressans. Tout ce qui étoit homme fut sacré pour lui et parut digne à Shakespeare d'être admis sur la scène avec les Rois, parce que les Rois lui parurent aussi des hommes. Il les peignit sans farder leurs images ; jamais il n'en fit des héros, ni des demi-dieux imaginaires ; mais toujours sa plume sincère les repréSENTA fidèlement dans ses écrits tels qu'ils avoient existé sur le Trône." — Vol. I. p. lxxvi.

laws of no existing school. Had he lived a century later, he would have been forced into voluntary imitation and would have been less original than he was. In the ideal cultivation of art, concludes Le Tourneur, where fidelity to nature is the fundamental principle, it will be free from those cold and cowardly critics who, measuring nature with insufficient rules, consider its noble and majestic proportions as gigantic, and in order to judge them beautiful, would reduce them to the petty ideas which they themselves have formed.

After the *Vie de Shakespeare* came a *Discours des Préfaces* chiefly composed of extracts from the prefaces of various editors of Shakespeare, such as Pope, Rowe, Warburton, Johnson, Hanmer, Sewell, etc. Le Tourneur carefully explained that this *discours* contained very little of his own composition, only a few phrases added here and there to weld the different extracts into a continuous and harmonious whole.

A noteworthy thing in this *discours* is Le Tourneur's definition of *romantique*, a term which he uses and explains for the first time in the history of literature.¹

¹ "Nous n'avons dans notre langue que deux mots, peut-être même qu'un seul, pour exprimer une vue, une scène d'objets, un paysage, qui attache les yeux et captive l'imagi-

Although purporting to be merely a compilation of extracts, this *Discours* contained, nevertheless, many more of Le Tourneur's own judgments and opinions than he admitted in

nation ; si cette sensation éveille dans l'âme émue, des affections tendres et des idées mélancoliques, alors ces deux mots : *Romanesque* et *Pittoresque* ne suffisent pas pour le rendre. Le premier, très souvent pris en mauvaise part, est alors synonyme de chimérique et de fabuleux : il signifie à la lettre un objet de Roman qui n'existe que dans le pays de la féerie, dans les rêves bizarres de l'imagination, et ne se trouve point dans la nature. Le second n'exprime que les effets d'un tableau quelconque, où diverses masses rapprochées forment un ensemble qui frappe les yeux et le fait admirer, mais sans que l'âme y participe, sans que le cœur y prenne un tendre intérêt. Le mot anglois est plus heureux et plus énergique. En même temps qu'il renferme l'idée de ces parties groupées d'une manière neuve et variée propre à étonner le sens, il porte de plus dans l'âme le sentiment de l'émotion douce et tendre qui naît à leur vue, et joint ensemble les effets physiques et moraux de la perspective. Si ce vallon n'est que pittoresque, c'est un point de l'étendu qui prête au Peintre et qui mérite d'être distingué et saisi par l'art. Mais s'il est Romantique, on désire de s'y reposer, l'œil se plait à le regarder et bientôt l'imagination attendrie le peuple de scènes intéressantes : elle oublie le vallon pour se complaire dans les idées, dans les images qu'il lui a inspirées. Les tableaux de Salvator Rosa, quelques sites des Alpes, plusieurs Jardins et Campagnes de l'Angleterre, ne sont point *romanesques* : mais on peut dire qu'ils sont plus que pittoresques, c'est à dire touchans et Romantiques. — Vol. I. p. cxviii, note. Cited also by Michiels, Lacroix, Jusserand, Lounsbury.

his explanatory note. Not a few sentences and paragraphs are of his own invention, suggested perhaps by something said by one of the editors he had been reading. From the shelter of the names of these English critics, he was able to give utterance to his boldest and most radical ideas upon the drama in general, and upon Shakespeare in particular, and here he went far in advance even of Mercier, one of the most enthusiastic admirers of the English dramatist. Le Tourneur declared, for example, that to condemn Shakespeare according to the rules of Aristotle would be like judging a Republican according to the laws of a foreign monarchy. If Shakespeare had been born in Athens and had then put upon the stage these plays which are grander and more vast than those of Euripides and Sophocles, it is certain that Aristotle, struck by imitations of nature so faithful and so lifelike, would have adopted different principles from those of these great dramatists.

It is an abuse of criticism to take to itself the right to govern opinions, to set up as sacred one kind of drama and proscribe another. It is nothing but superstition to obey laws imposed by mere authority, and the autocratic critic should

be called before the tribunal of nature, fidelity to which should be the sole standard of judgment. These were bold words, and Le Tourneur might well tremble for the success of his enterprise, introduced by such an audacious attack on the very foundations of French taste. That he fully realized the difficulties of the situation is shown by his concluding remarks, but the knowledge did not lead him to modify his statements. After all, he says, our task is to translate rather than to judge Shakespeare, and this task, full of peril and difficulty in itself, finds further obstacles in national prejudice. Instead of an encouraging indulgence, we have in prospect only the censure of the two nations, and success seems to be imposed upon us as a rigorous law and an ungrateful necessity. Nevertheless, he continues hopefully, the merit of the work compensates for its difficulty. Never will Shakespeare's blemishes eclipse his beauties and his glory ; he has riches enough to appease the most severe critic, and criticism will bend beneath the charm of his genius. Our own nation, furthermore, is capable of perceiving and acknowledging virtues and talents which do not belong to it. We have learned that if our

country is blessed with a benignant sky and smiling fruitfulness, the rest of the globe is neither savage nor accursed ; and that in the empire of letters as well as in the physical universe, there are, in every department, advantageous exchanges to be made of our own productions and those of other countries.

There is, however, at Paris, a class of thoughtless Aristarchs, who have already weighed Shakespeare in their limited balance, and although he has never been translated or known in France, they know the exact sum of his beauties and defects. Without ever having read this poet, without even understanding his language, they describe him, in a word, as a savage who has let fall some happy and forcible lines, but who has nothing of value to offer to a delicate and refined people. Another class of probable opponents of the translation consists of men who fear the effects of Shakespeare upon France and French literature. They fear that under his influence the French theatre will be overwhelmed with monsters, burials, rivers of blood, atrocities of all kinds. Our great poets will be insulted by a foreign race which will

confound all kinds of composition and will bury our masterpieces under the mass of its black and bizarre productions.

“Vous ne partagez point,” concludes Le Tourneur, “ces vaines alarmes, ô vous, Mânes révérés de nos grands Poètes dramatiques. Dépouillés des préjugés et des petits intérêts de nos critiques, et sûrs de votre immortalité, vous préférez l'étranger qui a su inventer dans votre Art, au fade encens, aux froides copies, de vos serviles imitateurs : et semblables aux Romains, vous voyez entrer dans le capitole les dieux des autres nations, sans trembler pour vos autels et pour le culte de la patrie.”

From these sentiments and many more scattered throughout the hundred and forty pages of prefatory matter, it will be readily seen that a reaction against Shakespeare and the Gothic drama on the part of the conservative upholders of French classic models was inevitable. No such revolution in taste, as the immediate and thorough appreciation of Shakespeare by a nation opposed to his system by temperament, education, and ideals would have signified, was possible without many a struggle and much literary bloodshed. The appearance

in 1776 of these two innocent-seeming volumes was the signal for the breaking out of one of the fiercest and most picturesque wars in the history of literature. The entire literary world was divided into two camps, the conservatives on one side and the liberals on the other. It was as if a question of national honor were at stake; it was almost an international literary quarrel. At the head of the army opposing Shakespeare was Voltaire, the very man who had been one of the first to introduce the English poet to his countrymen. Voltaire's attitude towards Shakespeare had been considerably modified within the last fifteen years. To be sure, he had not greeted the translations of La Place with any degree of cordiality, but he was keen sighted enough to realize that this travesty gave too inadequate and imperfect an idea of Shakespeare to be worthy of serious attention. In 1761 his conclusion of the whole matter at the close of his comparison of Julius Cæsar and Cinna, that the genius of Corneille is to that of Shakespeare what a nobleman is to a man of the people born with the same intelligence as himself, showed that the reaction in his mind had begun. From that time on, in

his correspondence, in the *Dictionary*, in the *Théâtre Anglois par Jérôme Carré*, he began openly to withdraw more and more from praise and appreciation of Shakespeare and to uphold with increasing ardor the sacred models of the French classic drama. He was, however, of too keen an intellect and too penetrating and just in judgment not to appreciate the power and beauty of Shakespeare, even while disapproving his methods. He admired much in Shakespeare, and a study of his own dramas shows various improvements and modifications due to the influence of the English poet. Why, then, should the appearance of a complete translation have roused him to such a passion of rage? The reason, after all, is not far to seek. Conservative as he was in matters of literary taste, and believing thoroughly in the perfection of the classic models of French drama, he thought he saw a serious menace to the purity of his own dramatic literature in the undue influence of the Gothic drama. It is possible, too, that he realized, unconsciously perhaps, the lack of moderation in his countrymen when under the influence of a new idea. He may have recognized the fact that, as they had

gone wild over the poetry of Young and the gloomy meditations of Hervey, they were likely to go to extremes in their transports of delight in Shakespeare or in their adoption of his methods.

But besides these sincere, legitimate, and well-founded reasons was another, even more powerful, which impelled Voltaire to the bitterest opposition. This was the feeling of wounded vanity and pride. He was himself a dramatic poet of talent and ability. His work, in which he had honestly tried to carry on worthily the splendid task begun by Corneille and Racine, had been much admired. He had, furthermore, already made in his own dramas all the modifications and changes suggested by an acquaintance with Shakespeare's works that it seemed to him the French drama could endure and still retain its native purity and perfection. He saw, then, his own prestige as a dramatist threatened by too great an enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Possibly he feared, too, the detection, on the part of the public, of the source of many of his dramatic innovations, which he had neglected to mention, and which one might have supposed to be the result of his own supe-

rior genius. Furthermore, Voltaire had been, for years, the literary autocrat of France, the leader and director of literary taste. It was he himself, he felt, who had discovered Shakespeare, and introduced him to France. The public had been properly grateful to him for this favor, and, up to the present time, had been generally content to follow his lead in this, as in other matters, to believe implicitly what he said, and to admire as much or as little as he directed. Now, however, he saw not only his prestige as a dramatist, but his glory as the leader of literary taste threatened, and that, seriously. Things were going too fast for him. He foresaw that he could no longer control them, and that was enough to rouse his anger. But there was yet more. In all the hundred and forty pages of prefatory matter to the translation there was no mention, however slight, of France's, nay, of Europe's greatest living dramatist. Of Corneille and of Racine, yes; but of him, upon whom their mantle of genius had fallen, not a single word. In his first anger he did not stop to consider that, as a matter of fact, none of these things was true, or that there was no especial reason why his

name should be coupled with a translation of Shakespeare. He did not pause to reflect that the surest way of retaining his leadership, in any event, would be to put himself at once at the head of a movement as inevitable as it was popular. He saw only the purity of the national drama threatened, its principles attacked, his own prestige as a dramatist and leader lost, himself ignored, and his teaching contradicted. It was too much; he raised at once the battle cry, classicists to the rescue, and declared immediate and relentless war upon Le Tourneur and all his works. The story of this controversy has been already told, and it will be sufficient to indicate here only that portion of it which directly concerns Le Tourneur.

Voltaire's first move in the war was his famous letter to d'Argental, the 19th of August, 1776:

“Il faut que je vous dise combien je suis fâché pour l'honneur du *tripot*, contre un nommé Tourneur, qu'on dit secrétaire de la librairie, et qui ne me paraît pas le secrétaire du bon goût. Auriez-vous lu les deux volumes de ce misérable dans lesquels il veut nous faire regarder

Shakespeare comme le seul modèle de la véritable tragédie ? Il l'appelle le *dieu du théâtre*. Il sacrifie tous les Français, sans exception, à son idole, comme on sacrifiait autrefois des cochons à Cérès. Il ne daigne pas même nommer Corneille et Racine ; ces deux grands hommes sont seulement enveloppés dans la proscription générale, sans que leurs noms soient prononcés. Il y a déjà deux tomes imprimés de ce Shakespeare qu'on prendrait pour des pièces de la Foire, faites il y a deux cents ans. Ce barbouilleur a trouvé le secret de faire engager le roi, la reine, et toute la famille royale, à souscrire à son ouvrage. Avez-vous lu son abominable grimoire dont il y aura encore cinq volumes ? Avez-vous une haine assez vigoureuse contre cet imprudent imbécile ? souffrirez vous l'affront qu'il fait à la France ? Il n'y a point en France assez de camouflets, assez de bonnets d'âne, assez de piloris pour un pareil faquin. Le sang pétille dans mes vieilles veines, en vous parlant de lui. S'il ne vous a pas mis en colère, je vous tiens pour un homme impassible. Ce qu'il y a d'affreux, c'est que le monstre a un parti en France ; et, pour comble de calamité et d'horreur, c'est moi qui, autrefois,

parlai le premier de ce Shakespeare ; c'est moi, qui le premier, montrai aux Français quelques perles que j'avais trouvées dans son énorme fumier. Je ne m'attendais pas que je servirais un jour à fouler aux pieds les couronnes de Racine et de Corneille, pour en orner le front d'un histrion barbare.”¹

This remarkable document was widely circulated and made a great stir. It came like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky upon the unfortunate translators, and especially upon Le Tourneur, for whom Voltaire had, six years before, expressed the utmost cordiality and appreciation on the occasion of his translation of Young. The letter was printed in the *Correspondance secrète* in August,² and in November appeared, in the same periodical, a letter by Le Tourneur, in which, with great generosity and mildness, he treats the whole thing as a piece of forgery.

¹ Voltaire *Oeuvres*, ed. Didot, 1862, Vol. XIII. p. 388.

² “ Vous ne pourrez, Monsieur, lire sans étonnement, la lettre dont je vous envoie une copie fidèle. On voit qu'elle a été écrite dans l'effervescence de la colère d'un vieillard morose mais ce n'est pas assurément là la colère d'Achille, et vous y retrouverez même si peu la manière du *grand homme* que vous douterez comme moi qu'il l'ait écrite.” *Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire*, London, 1787, 8 vols., Vol. III. p. 269.

His letter is embodied in one to the editor, dated Paris, Nov. 11, 1776.¹

“ Monsieur ! vous aurez peut-être rencontré la copie d'une lettre que les ennemis de M. de Voltaire ont répandue, à l'occasion de la traduction de Shakespeare. Cette lettre vous aura paru inconcevable, et vous en aurez jugé comme tous les gens sensés, qui ont rendu justice à ce grand écrivain en refusant toute croyance à cet écrit. Ils ont regardé comme impossible que cet illustre vieillard ait, sans motif et sans offense, laissé échapper de sa plume immortelle une foule de phrases et d'expressions qui choquent bien plus la décence et la vérité que la personne qui en paroît l'objet. Ils n'ont pu imaginer comment M. de Voltaire qui nous a le premier avertis du génie de ce poète anglois, qui nous a appris qu'il n'étoit encore ni connu ni traduit en France, qui s'est délassé lui-même à nous en donner quelques morceaux, qui, enfin, a daigné

¹ *Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire*, London, 1787, 18 vols.

De Paris le 11 Novembre, 1776.

“ Je vais vous transcrire une lettre très ingénieuse et très bien faite de M. Le Tourneur sur la lettre que je vous ai communiquée de M. de Voltaire, à M. d'Argental.” — Vol. III. p. 416.

souscrire pour notre ouvrage, et qui, par là, nous a permis d'illustrer de son nom la nouvelle liste du troisième volume, m'auroit, six mois après la publication des deux premiers, choisi seul pour me faire un crime de cette entreprise, de son exécution et de son succès chez les deux nations. Par quel intérêt auroit-il affecté un silence injurieux pour mes deux associés, qui ont dans le travail une part égale à la mienne ? les défauts qui déparent Shakespeare, et tout ce qu'il peut offrir d'étrange pour le goût et pour nos règles n'ont pu l'irriter à cet excès ; il les connoissoit avant nous. Il n'approuvoit pas davantage les défauts d'Young, et sa triste abondance en quelques endroits, et il n'en a pas moins écrit en 1769, au traducteur des Nuits, une lettre honnête et flatteuse. C'est donc évidemment une insulte à la gloire de M. de Voltaire, que la supposition d'une lettre injurieuse que rien n'a provoquée, contre un homme qui lui a toujours payé le tribut d'estime et de vénération qu'on doit à ses écrits et à sa renommée. Mais quand il seroit possible que M. de Voltaire, trompé par quelque faux rapport qui l'auroit aigri, eût déposé son ressentiment dans le sein d'un ami, qui croira jamais que cet ami ait pu livrer à des

mains étrangères ce premier épanchement de sa sensibilité? il est donc inutile d'entrer dans les détails de cette lettre prétendue, pour y chercher des preuves de sa supposition. Ce seroit combattre sérieusement une chimère. Il suffit d'avertir que c'en est une, et même cet avis ne sera guère utile qu'à quelques lecteurs inconsidérés, qui, faute de réfléchir, auroient pu compromettre dans leur esprit trois réputations à la fois."

The most remarkable thing about this letter of Le Tourneur, as striking for its tone of charitableness and dignity as Voltaire's is for angry prejudice and lack of self-control, is the statement that Voltaire was a subscriber to the translation of Shakespeare. Le Tourneur declares positively that Voltaire's name is to figure on the new list of subscribers in volume three, but it is not there, nor can any other intimation be found that he had the slightest intention of buying it. It is altogether likely, however, that he was anxious to see the translation as soon as it was announced, and quite possible that he subscribed for it too late for his name to appear on the first list, and yet before the publication of the first volume with its obnoxious prefatory

matter. It would then be simple quietly to withdraw his subscription before any one knew that he had made it, and before his angry outburst to d'Argental. Whether or not this letter of Le Tourneur ever came to his attention it is impossible to determine. At all events he never took any notice of it, but continued for the two remaining years of his life to pour forth invective and abuse upon the innocent translator.

Voltaire's first letter was the signal for war, not admittedly a personal quarrel between himself and Le Tourneur, but an international warfare, French drama against English, classic against romantic, Corneille and Racine against "Gilles Shakespeare," France against England. To d'Argental he wrote again, July 30, in a frenzy of despair and rage which is almost comic.

"Mon cher ange, l'abomination de la désolation est dans le temple du Seigneur. Lekain . . . me dit que presque toute la jeunesse de Paris est pour Le Tourneur, que les échafauds et les b...ls anglais l'emportent sur le théâtre de Racine et sur les belles scènes de Corneille; qu'il n'y a plus rien de grand et de décent à Paris que les Gilles de Londres, et, qu'enfin, on va donner une tragédie en prose où il y a

une assemblée de bouchers qui fera un merveilleux effet. J'ai vu finir le règne de la raison et du goût. Je vais mourir en laissant la France barbare, mais heureusement vous vivez, et je me flatte que la reine ne laissera pas sa nouvelle patrie dont elle fait le charme, en proie à des sauvages et à des monstres. Je me flatte que M. le maréchal de Duras ne nous aura pas fait l'honneur d'être de l'académie pour nous voir manger par des Hottentots. Je me suis quelquefois plaint des Welches; mais j'ai voulu venger les Français avant de mourir."

Voltaire's method of avenging the French was his famous letters to the Academy, read by d'Alembert the 25th of August. On the 14th he wrote to M. de Vaines:

"Le 25 du mois, monsieur, je combats en champ clos, sous les étendards de M. d'Alembert contre Gilles Le Tourneur, écuyer de Gilles Shakespeare."

To La Harpe he had written encouragingly on the 13th:

"M. d'Alembert et vos autres amis, font, ce me semble, une œuvre bien patriotique et bien méritoire d'oser défendre en pleine académie, Sophocle, Corneille, Euripide et Racine

contre Gilles Shakespeare et Pierrot Le Tourneur. Il faudrait se laver les mains après cette bataille, car vous aurez à combattre contre des gadouards. Je ne m'attendais pas que la France tonberait un jour dans l'abîme d'ordures où on l'a plongée ; voilà l'abomination de la désolation dans le lieu saint."

The "meritorious and patriotic work" of the faithful d'Alembert consisted largely in repeating obediently Voltaire's opinions, and in reading for him, before the Academy, the letters which he had prepared for the defense of France against England. In these remarkable documents, Voltaire's personal anger, his wounded vanity, his brilliant and stinging sarcasm, his plausible inaccuracy and eloquent injustice of statement are shown with a clearness and power at once pathetic, comic, and exasperating. Le Tourneur, under the name of "the translator" and "the secretary of the French booksellers," was fiercely attacked for having wished to humiliate his country, for trying to sacrifice France to England, for daring to say that Shakespeare had never been adequately known or translated. This was the secret of Voltaire's wrath. Had not he himself been the

first in France to learn English? Had he not translated Shakespeare and introduced him to his countrymen? For this he had already, and long since, suffered opposition, criticism, martyrdom. With its usual lack of *mesure*, the pendulum of public taste had swung too far the other way, and had he not been obliged, by his commentary on Corneille in 1761, to try to check a movement which he had himself started? But if, after all, the public desires to know Shakespeare fully, it should at least know him as he is. This translation is not what it claims to be. It does not represent Shakespeare exactly. Why, in a conscientious rendering, should any one of his gross expressions be omitted? Let us, at least, be just, and see this great man as he is. In order to show Shakespeare's manner and genius, Voltaire then translated, with apologies to his audience, several passages, selected for their coarse expressions, from *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. This, he explained, is the eloquence of the much-vaunted Shakespeare. It is true that he has flashes of power, moments of beauty; but shall this barbarian be set above Racine and Corneille? Voltaire concluded his

address with a burst of overwhelming and unanswerable eloquence:

“Figurez vous, messieurs, Louis XIV. dans sa galerie de Versailles, entouré de sa cour brillante ; un Gilles couvert de lambeaux perce la foule des héros, des grands hommes et des beautés qui composent cette cour ; il leur propose de quitter Corneille, Racine et Molière, pour un saltimbanque qui a des saillies heureuses, et qui fait des contorsions. Comment croyez-vous que cette offre serait reçue ?”

Notwithstanding the brilliant victory which the stir occasioned by the reading of these letters seemed to indicate, Voltaire, whose frenzy appeared to increase, rather than to spend itself, in the expression of his feelings, now completely lost his head. Forgetting all sense of decency, all notions of diplomacy and tact, he first insinuated that love of money had caused Le Tourneur’s defection to the English, second, that the only reason they preferred Shakespeare to Corneille was because of the superior talent of the actor Garrick;¹ and

¹ A M. DE VAINES :

7 septembre.

“Je ne suis monsieur, qu’un vieux houssard, mais j’ai combattu tout seul contre une armée entière de pandours. Je me flatte qu’à la fin il se trouvera de braves français qui

finally, he wrote to the Duc de Richelieu¹ to try to stop the circulation of the translation of *Le Tourneur*, who had dared to put the names of the king and queen in a work which was a dishonor to France.

se joindront à moi, s'il y a des Welches qui m'abandonnent. M. de La Harpe répondra mieux que moi à M. Le Tourneur en donnant son *Menzicof* et ses *Barmécides*. . . .

“Je suis persuadé que vous avez été indigné contre l’insolente mauvaise foi d’un secrétaire de notre librairie, qui a la bassesse d’immoler la France à l’Angleterre, pour obtenir quelques souscriptions des Anglais qui viennent à Paris. Il est impossible qu’un homme qui n’est pas absolument fou ait pu, de sang froid, préférer un Gilles tel que Shakespeare, à Corneille et à Racine. Cette infamie ne peut avoir été commise que par une sordide avarice qui court après les guinées.

“Je sais que Garrick a pu faire illusion par son jeu, qui est, dit-on, très pittoresque ; il aura pu représenter très naturellement les passions que Shakespeare a défigurées en les outrant d’une manière ridicule ; et quelques anglais se sont imaginé que Shakespeare vaut mieux que Corneille, parce que Garrick est supérieur à Molé.

“Voilà peut-être l’origine de la bizarre erreur des Anglais. Je les abandonne à leur sens réprouvé, et je ne me rétracterai pas pour leur plaisir.”

¹ AU DUC DE RICHELIEU : À Ferney, 11 septembre.

“J’ignore si vous honorâtes l’académie de votre présence le jour qu’on y lut ce petit ouvrage [his letters of August 25]. On peut pardonner à des Anglais de vanter leurs Gilles et leurs Polichinelles ; mais est-il permis à des gens de lettres français d’oser préférer des parades si basses, si dégoûtantes et si absurdes, aux chefs d’œuvre de Cinna et

The natural result of all this was to increase vastly the interest in Shakespeare, and to create a great amount of talk. Unfortunately for Voltaire's hopes, he was not taken as seriously in the matter as he wished and intended to be. The international war between France and England, which he seemed to think was begun, died a tranquil death of mere inaction. There was plenty of fighting on Voltaire's part, but a lamentable want of spirit and action in Shakespeare's country. Little notice was taken of the matter, even of Voltaire's letters to the Academy, which were translated into English and published in London in 1777.¹

The English, secure in their belief that Shakespeare was superior to all other dramatists, ancient and modern, treated this attack upon him with silent contempt, for the most part, much as a mastiff might regard the fren-

d'Athalie ? Il me paraît que tous les honnêtes gens de Paris (car il y en a encore) sont indignés de cette méprisable insolence. Le sieur Le Tourneur a osé mettre le nom du roi et de la reine à la tête de son édition, qui doit déshonorer la France dans toute l'Europe. C'est assurément au petit neveu de notre fondateur à protéger la nation dans cette guerre."

¹ Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, p. 401.

zied yelpings of an angry terrier. With the exception of brief notices in the periodicals and a few scattering comments on Voltaire's attack, the only movements from England in this international warfare were Baretti's *Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Voltaire* in 1777¹ and a French translation of Mrs. Montague's essay.² Voltaire, for his part, carried on the battle almost single-handed, aided chiefly by the faithful La Harpe and d'Alembert, and applauded more or less loudly by the conservative party in literature. As time went on, he became more and more discouraged before the advancing tide of enthusiasm for Shakespeare, but even in February, 1778, on his last visit to Paris, dealt the English poet a final, though ineffective, blow in his preface to *Irène*.

If England were backward and indifferent in fighting for the reputation of her great dramatist, the partisans of Shakespeare in France showed a fiery and unwearied zeal in defending

¹ *Discours sur Shakespeare et sur M. de Voltaire*, par J. Baretti, London and Paris, 1777, in 8vo, 186 pp.

² *Apologie de Shakespear (sic) en réponse à la critique de Voltaire*, traduite de l'anglois, Paris et Londres, 1777, in 8vo.

him, and rallied valiantly round his standard with courage and devotion. As the successive volumes of the translation appeared, the contest went on hotly in the periodicals, and not until 1780 did the warmth or interest of the discussion show any signs of diminution.

“There are very strong parties pro and con here at Paris,” wrote an Englishwoman to Garrick in 1777. “All the Voltairians cry it down; others again are more enthusiastic (if possible) than we are who have tasted of the Avon. For my own part, the best I can say of it is, that it is Shakespeare reduced to the simple state of nature, despoiled of his gorgeous pomp and majesty, his brilliancy and his graces, but not disfigured.”¹

Grimm,² who represented a third, middle party, actively neither for nor against Shakespeare, gave a clear and judicious account of the whole matter in a letter to Diderot in March, 1776. He dismissed as unworthy of discussion the question of Shakespeare’s merit,

¹ Garrick *Correspondence*, 1777, Vol. II. p. 214; cited by Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, p. 409.

² *Correspondance Littéraire*, Grimm, Diderot, 1879, Vol. IX. pp. 214-220.

declaring that his works would not have endured for two centuries the delight and admiration of the English nation had they not possessed value and power. He deplored the petty anger of Voltaire and his followers, and pleaded for a tolerant and impartial judgment of the English poet. He believed that each system of dramatic composition had its merits, and that it was foolish to insist that one was better than the other. He felt, however, that there was danger in an excessive admiration for Shakespeare, for young and inexperienced dramatists might be tempted to imitate him slavishly, and, lacking his genius, would succeed in reproducing only his faults.

The most active supporters of Shakespeare and his translators were Mercier and the Chevalier de Rutlidge. The former, who had already announced himself as a radical in matters of dramatic taste by his essay upon Dramatic Art,¹ continued to express his advanced ideas in letters to the *Journal François, Anglois et Italien*.² He warmly encouraged the translators in their

¹ *Essai sur l'Art Dramatique*, Amsterdam, 1773.

² *Journal François, Anglois et Italien*, August and September, 1777. Also *De la Littérature et des Littérateurs, suivi d'un Nouvel Examen de la Tragédie Françoise*, Paris, 1775.

undertaking, commended their method, gave an enthusiastic account of *Othello* and *Julius Cæsar*, and fully justified Shakespeare's defiance of the rules.¹

The Chevalier de Rutlidge, for his part, had boldly asserted the superiority of Shakespeare over all other dramatists, and had defended the translators, in his reply to Voltaire's letters to the Academy.² Two years later, he commented again upon Le Tourneur's translation through

¹ "We beg leave to refer our readers to the preface prefixed to this work [the translation of Shakespeare], a discourse abounding with sound sense, and written with energy and precision, in which these fantastic rules, so superstitiously adhered to by the poets in our days, are exploded by arguments founded on reason as well as experience, and so conclusive withal, that to controvert the truth of them were deserving to be answered with silent contempt; the marks of conviction they bear are such that they would seem tacitly to reproach us for having suffered ourselves to be so long circumscribed by ridiculous rules, productive of no sort of advantage; what, indeed, is that which is generally and improperly called irregularity? nothing more than the connection of facts and the natural order of events. . . . Penetrated by the influence of this vast genius we behold him as superior to all other dramatic poets as St. Peter's Church at Rome is to all other churches." — *Journal François, Anglois et Italien*, August and September, 1777.

² *Observations à MM. de l'Académie à l'Occasion d'une Certaine Lettre de M. Voltaire*, par le Chevalier de Rutlidge, Paris, 1776.

his periodical, *Le Babillard*, an imitation of the English *Tatler*. Although heartily approving the attempt, he considered Le Tourneur's work inferior to his adaptations of Young. He understands Shakespeare, he said; sometimes the touch of the great poet is felt, but, as a translator, he fails to seize a certain brusque and laconic sublimity, certain vigorous strokes which characterize his model.

In the course of his remarks, Rutlidge, without calling any names, took occasion to give more than one fling at the criticism of Shakespeare, based upon ignorance, which was being widely promulgated by "l'Oracle de Ferney et ses échos." In this connection, he related an amusing anecdote which he declared to be true. A man of letters, he said, happened one day to be in one of the principal book-shops of the city, when there came in a person who showed plainly by his dress and affected manners that he was some one of importance. This person asked for the latest new books, picked them up one after another, turned over the leaves, and bought nothing. Finally, he was asked if he would like the translation of Shakespeare. He took it, turned it over, then

refused it, adding in a pedagogic and absent-minded manner that he had already read that in the "Greek Theatre" of the Père Brumoy. "It will be argued, I think," concluded Rutlidge, "that if this celebrated English poet and his translator have many judges as learned as this, their adversaries have an easy task."¹ Rutlidge followed this with a letter addressed directly to Le Tourneur, in which he commended the work, and urged him to continue it, regretting only that he had not seen fit to give an outline of some of the more trivial scenes, instead of translating them completely.²

¹ *Le Babillard*, Aug. 15, 1778, Vol. II. p. 335.

² LE BABILLARD

▲

M. Le Tourneur, Traducteur des Tragédies de Shakespeare.

"Vous avez eu la bonté de m'envoyer les deux nouveaux volumes de votre traduction d'un grand Poète ; le succès de cette entreprise difficile doit vous dédommager de la passion avec laquelle on vous attaque. Ceux pour qui les cabales littéraires ne sont que de vains et tumultueux délires de l'amour propre des Auteurs, vous liront avec plaisir et vous rendront justice, ainsi qu'à l'Ecrivain original que vous entreprenez de nous faire connoître. Personne n'est moins propre que moi à faire l'éloge de votre Traduction, ni à entreprendre sa critique : l'une et l'autre seroient d'autant plus suspectes que quelques personnes s'imaginent que j'y ai part, et que d'autres m'ont prêté des sentiments bien éloignés de ceux que m'ont inspiré votre courage et votre

assiduité à remplir une tâche aussi pénible. Permettez-moi cependant de vous donner un avis, qui vous sera plus utile que toutes les vaines décisions que je pourrois hasarder sur votre travail, continuez-le, Monsieur : son importance et son prix se feront sentir d'eux-mêmes ; mais il est une espèce d'hommes dont vous devez vous défier beaucoup plus que de vos aveugles détracteurs, ou de ceux de votre Auteur, ce sont ses plus grands enthousiastes. Je n'ai jamais pensé que tout fût bon dans Shakespeare : au contraire, j'y vois une multitude de défauts que ce puissant génie auroit évités s'il fût venu deux siècles plus tard, je pense qu'il seroit nécessaire de développer et de peindre aux Lecteurs le mouvement et l'action de quelques scènes, au lieu d'en traduire fidèlement le dialogue. Ce mouvement et cette action y sont noyés et anéantis. Un lecteur françois s'en fera difficilement de lui-même un tableau, parce que c'est une chose étrangère pour ses yeux et fort éloignée de son imagination ; il seroit donc nécessaire qu'il fût averti et prévenu ; je vous citerai dans ce genre les premières scènes de Coriolan. Les Critiques qui ne voient pas toujours bien loin, les trouveront ridicules et triviales peut-être : exécutées en grand et mises en action sous les regards, elles auroient produit l'effet auquel le Poète les a destinées ; elles auroient fait connoître ce peuple menteur et factieux, qui justifie par ses excès le mépris de son Héros. Voilà ce que j'aurois quelquefois désiré dans quelques unes des Pièces de Shakespeare que vous avez traduites. C'est un des moyens qu'il emploie le plus heureusement dans toutes ses grandes machines dramatiques. Vous avez, Monsieur, à combattre les préjugés de l'amour-propre : ce sont les plus obstinés et les plus furieux. Attendez-vous à quelques traits d'esprit de la part de Duluth et de tous les Zoïles de cette force. Je suis persuadé qu'ils vous alarmeront peu, et que vous leur rendez trop de justice pour regarder désormais une seule fois derrière vous dans la carrière où vous courrez." — *Le Babillard*, Aug. 30, 1778, Vol. II. p. 382.

The translator also received high praise in the *Journal Anglois*¹ and in the *Année Littéraire*. The latter published detailed studies of the plays as they appeared, and while highly commending Le Tourneur and his work, repeated Voltaire's early statement that Shakespeare was a great genius, but wild and uncultivated.² Even the more tolerant and enlightened French minds were shocked by Shakespeare's constant violation of the rules, by his mingling of the comic and the tragic, by his introduction of common people, by his scenes of violence, and by his vulgarity and coarseness of speech. These faults, however, should be looked upon with indulgence, for they were defects due to the barbarism of the time in which Shakespeare lived, to ignorance of the rules of art, and to the necessity he was under of amusing a rough and uncultured people. They are, indeed, atoned for by the remarkable power and beauty to be found among the plays. Nevertheless, continued the *Année Littéraire*, it is a pity for the reader to have to wade through so much

¹ *Journal Anglois*, 1776.

² *Année Littéraire*, 1776, Vol. II. p. 30.

"Les ouvrages du génie ressemblent à ceux de la nature, qui n'a point dans ses travaux la froide régularité des productions de l'art."

that is trivial and uninteresting. "Des extraits bien faits du théâtre de ce Poète auroient été une véritable richesse pour notre littérature, mais qu'aura-t-il fait pour le profit de ses lecteurs en leur faisant acheter 20 volumes d'ennui par souscription, quand deux ou trois volumes auroient suffi pour leur curiosité et pour leur plaisir?"¹ But in spite of occasional impatience, the general attitude of the *Année Littéraire* is shown by the concluding paragraph in its study of Henry VI. in 1782:

"Nous invitons nos jeunes Poètes qui se destinent à l'étude du théâtre, à lire cet auteur avec précaution; il peut servir à éléver l'âme, à inspirer des sentimens tragiques, à fournir des situations, mais il ne donnera jamais la moindre idée de la vraisemblance, de ces règles qui ont formé les Sophocle, les Euripide, les Racine. Cependant, nous ne saurions témoigner trop de reconnaissance au Traducteur; il étend le nombre de nos richesses littéraires, il nous met en état de comparer, ce qui augmente les connaissances et fortifie conséquemment les talens. La lecture de Shakespeare est capable d'échauffer, de développer les semences du

¹ *Année Littéraire*, 1780, Vol. III. p. 289.

genre tragique. C'est donc une nouvelle obligation que les Arts ont à M. Le Tourneur, connu déjà si avantageusement par sa belle traduction ou imitation d'Young."¹

The *Journal des Savants* followed the example of the *Année Littéraire*, and gave full accounts of the different plays as they were published. It applauded Le Tourneur for his work, which enabled the French people to compare their own drama with that of another nation, and thus broaden ideas and form the general taste, but declared that, after all, this newly discovered power and beauty must be used with wisdom and discretion, as had already been done by M. de Voltaire.²

¹ *Année Littéraire*, 1782, Vol. I. p. 73.

² *Journal des Savants*, 1779, June, p. 429.

"Lorsque tout le bien et tout le mal sont dits sur Shakespeare, il faut convenir que M. Le Tourneur rend un grand service à notre Littérature en nous faisant mieux connaitre ce singulier génie : que c'est par la comparaison du goût des différentes nations que les idées s'étendent et que le goût général peut se former et que M. de Voltaire lui-même s'est bien trouvé, dans plusieurs de ses ouvrages d'avoir étudié le génie anglois ; il est vrai qu'il faut savoir employer comme lui ces beautés étrangères, les adapter à sa langue, les fondre et les placer de manière que la couleur n'en soit ni effacée ni trop tranchante : en un mot, qu'il faut avoir le goût de M. de Voltaire."

The *Journal de politique et de littérature*, however, and the *Mercure de France* were far from sharing such commendatory views, but ranged themselves from the start on the side of conservatism and Voltaire. The former, directed by La Harpe after 1776, fiercely attacked the translation, declaring it to be a work due entirely to party spirit, unfaithful to the English original, incorrect as to French, and advancing, in its ill-written prefaces, views as foolish as they were revolting to all persons of refinement and taste. It called attention proudly to the way in which Voltaire had "embellished" Shakespeare in 1730, and indulged in a scathing and sarcastic criticism of the translation of certain scenes of *The Tempest* and *Othello*.¹ In this its example was followed by the *Mercure*,² which, although deplored the excessive severity of La Harpe, conceded that the most just appreciation that could be made upon Shakespeare had already been uttered by Voltaire, not, indeed, in his later years of anger, but at the time when he first made the English poet known to France. The *Journal de Paris* and the *Bibliothèque des Sciences*

¹ See Appendix D.

² *Mercure de France*, 1781, May; 1782, July.

et des Beaux Arts stood discreetly on the fence and attempted to agree with both parties at once.

All this discussion in the periodicals, which went on with more or less vigor for seven years, naturally helped to make an important event of the translation. No work was more talked of or so widely read. It was the fashion of the hour, and every one had an opinion, either his own or a borrowed one. The individual the least affected by the excitement was apparently Le Tourneur himself. He went on calmly and undisturbed in the work he had undertaken, and as soon as it was completed, he hastened to take up another, that of *Clarissa Harlowe*. His letter of surprised incredulousness, which was published at the time of Voltaire's letters to the Academy, is the only direct reply he seems ever to have made to the torrents of praise and blame poured unremittingly upon his head. But he referred to the matter once or twice, showing plainly that if he considered it beneath his notice, the quarrel had, nevertheless, left its impress upon him. In the preface to his edition of *Ossian*, which came out in 1777, he took occasion to mention that in these days it was necessary to declare one's profession of taste as well as of

faith, under pain of literary excommunication.¹ Again, in a notice to the subscribers prefixed to volume nine of the translation, which appeared in 1781, he spoke with natural and apparent satisfaction of the success of his work :

“ Cet ouvrage a triomphé, apparemment par son mérite réel, des singuliers obstacles qu'il a essuyés d'abord, de l'espèce de guerre assez bizarre qu'on lui a déclarée à sa naissance, du courroux extraordinaire d'un grand Poète, le premier panégyriste de Shakespeare, tant qu'il fut inconnu, et devenu son étrange ennemi dès qu'on l'a traduit. À tant d'alarmes, à ce tocsin des critiques, qui multiplioient les clamours beaucoup plus que les raisons, on eût dit que Shakespeare étoit un ennemi qui menaçoit d'en-vahir la France, et que la traduction d'un Poète Anglois, qui jadis donnoit un titre littéraire, étoit devenue une espèce d'attentat contre la Patrie.

“ Enfin tout s'est apaisé, et il paroît qu'on convient assez aujourd'hui, les uns hautement, les autres à demi voix, que cet Auteur étranger a un merite qui n'est pas ordinaire. Il paroît qu'à mesure qu'on le lit, on reconnoît que malgré les défauts qu'on peut lui reprocher, soit contre

¹ See p. 95.

le goût, soit contre notre manière et notre habitude de voir et de sentir, défauts dont il seroit bien étonnant qu'il fût exempt, ce n'en est pas moins une mine riche de génie, de belles scènes, de situations neuves, de caractères et de beautés dramatiques accumulées, où l'on puise déjà plus ou moins heureusement, et dont nos Auteurs feront de jour en jour un utile emploi, au profit même du Théâtre François, et des plaisirs de la Nation.

“ Le Traducteur fait tous ses efforts pour approcher de son original, et pour en conserver l'énergie et la couleur sans blesser sa langue. Quant à la fidélité de sa traduction, dont certains journalistes se sont permis de parler en aveugles, il a pour garant le suffrage de juges, sans doute éclairés, et du moins les plus compétents sur ce point. Il peut, sans orgueil, citer ici le temoignage des Anglois, imprimé dans l'édition récente de ce Poète.”¹

¹ “ Let me not forget the justice due to these ingenious Frenchmen whose skill and industry* in the execution of their very difficult undertaking is only exceeded by such a display of candour, as would serve to cover the imperfections of much less elegant and judicious writers.” — Tom. I. p. 210, seconde édition de Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, Londres, 1778.

* “ Fidelity ” in 8d edition, 1785, Vol. I. p. 216.

Le Tourneur, furthermore, had already taken a quiet and indirect revenge upon his detractors by printing, as a preface to volume seven the year before, parts of Mrs. Montague's letter, and some of the criticism of Eschenburg, who was, at the same time, getting out a new edition of a German translation by Wieland. Eschenburg treated Voltaire and his supporters with scant respect, declaring that the former was an imitator of Shakespeare, and referring to his criticism of Julius Caesar as "froide et jalouse."

But with these few exceptions, Le Tourneur treated the whole quarrel with dignified silence. As he said, his work succeeded by its own merits. He accomplished his end. He made the French people acquainted with Shakespeare. His translation not only aroused national interest, it became the standard through which his countrymen were to judge Shakespeare, and an edition of it, revised by Guizot, is still in use at the present day.

The question now arises as to the nature of the translation which aroused so fierce a discussion and which played so important a part in the history of Shakespeare in France. Before entering upon an examination of its merits

and demerits, however, it may be of interest to inquire what was the purpose and method of the translators in making it. This they explain clearly and at length in the "Avis sur cette Traduction" which closes the introductory matter to volume one.

"C'est une traduction exacte et vraiment fidèle que nous donnons ici," they begin confidently; "c'est une copie ressemblante où l'on retrouvera l'ordonnance, les attitudes, le coloris, les beautés et les défauts du tableau. Par cette raison même elle n'est pas, et ne doit pas être toujours rigoureusement littérale; ce seroit être infidèle à la vérité et trahir la gloire du poète. Il y a souvent des métaphores et des expressions qui, rendues mot à mot dans notre langue seroient basses ou ridicules, lorsqu'elles sont nobles dans l'original; car en Anglois il est très peu de mots bas. . . . Ainsi le devoir d'être fidèles nous imposoit celui de substituer à une métaphore qui, en François seroit devenue abjecte et populaire, une métaphore équivalente, qui conservât la dignité de l'original, et de chercher un autre mot pour rendre le mot qui se trouveroit bas dans notre langue, si on le traduisoit, comme traduisent les dictionnaires." The translators

regret that a large number of the beauties of metre and harmony of words have necessarily disappeared in their rendering. In order to save as many as possible they have followed Shakespeare's arrangement of phrases, his turns of expression, and even his inversions, as far as they could, in the hope that they would have even more grace and energy in French. But, they conclude, prudently, "Si quelque fois on est arrêté par une expression moins noble, on verra qu'elle tient au caractère et que nous l'avons préférée à un terme plus relevé pour conserver à l'original sa couleur, et au caractère, sa vérité." The same desire to transport the spirit of Shakespeare into their own tongue had caused them to hazard at times an expression either obsolete or new. To this expedient they have had recourse, not from any bold desire to perfect the French language, but in the necessity of despair. Finally, they attempt to forestall possible criticism for their rash and unwarranted procedure by the words, "Si la critique a la générosité de nous indiquer quelque ressource d'expression que notre vue bornée n'ait pas aperçue, nous profiterons aussi de ses bienfaits dans une nouvelle édition."

With this high ideal before them, the translators set to work. They began with the tragedies, which always seem to have attracted the French more than the comedies. The first two volumes upon which the three scholars labored contained *Othello*, *The Tempest*, and *Julius Cæsar*. Le Tourneur, when left alone to complete the task, continued with the tragedies, and in 1778 published the third and fourth volumes, containing *Coriolanus*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. These were followed by *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Timon of Athens*, in volumes five and six the next year, and the seven succeeding volumes were devoted to the historical plays, the last seven of all, from 1781–1783, containing the comedies.

It is to be noted, in regard to this translation as a whole, that it was not only a bold undertaking, but also a sincere attempt to produce a thorough and scholarly piece of work. A moment's comparison with what had been already done in the translation of Shakespeare shows the immense advantage of this over all that had preceded it. In the first place, the large amount of prefatory matter, the life of Shakespeare, and the comments of his various editors

in England, men above all others qualified to speak with authority, were an honest effort to explain his apparently anomalous position and to give the reader some kind of a literary background. The translation itself was made with the greatest care, not from one edition alone, but from a comparative study of the different texts, and was enriched with notes, taken, in most cases, from the English editors. An attempt was made, furthermore, at completeness, by giving, as far as possible, the sources of each play, and some critical comments on it. With all their good intentions and in spite of all the scrupulous care which they professed to use in their work, the translators cannot be said, from the modern point of view, to have reached the lofty standard of interpretation which they had set themselves to attain. On the score of accuracy, the translation leaves much to be desired. Many passages are inadequately and some wrongly translated. The methods of the interpreter of Young are clearly perceptible, and Le Tourneur's desire to present his author in the most favorable light leads him, not infrequently, to try to embellish his original. To any one already acquainted with his

work, however, and remembering the ideal of the eighteenth century in regard to the privileges and prerogatives of the translator, it will not be a matter for surprise to find many liberties taken with the text. Figures and metaphors are changed, coarse expressions softened, paraphrase is employed, words and phrases inserted, occasional sentences, paragraphs, and plays upon words are omitted or explained in a note. Stage directions are frequently added to give color and vividness to the scene. For example: "Desdemona entre, jeune, belle, parée de perles et de diamans suivant l'usage de Venise. Son front est serein, son maintien annonce la pudeur. Iago l'accompagne suivi des officiers du Sénat."¹ The English has merely: "Enter Desdemona, Iago, and Attendants."² In accordance with the tradition of the French theatre, the entry of a new actor upon the stage is marked by the beginning of a new scene. Otherwise, Shakespeare's arrangement is scrupulously followed. In almost every case where Le Tourneur has added more than a

¹ *Shakespeare, dédié au Roi*, Vol. I. *Othello*, Act I. Scene 9.

² *Shakespeare*, ed. Johnson and Steevens, 3d edition, 1785, Vol. X. *Othello*, Act I. Scene 3.

word, changed the metaphor, or amplified to any extent, he gives the English reading conscientiously in a note, with a literal rendering or an explanation of the exact meaning of the phrase. On the whole, the thought is pretty well rendered, though the translation is far from being as exact as its authors claimed. Nevertheless, it preserves the essential characteristics of Shakespeare and now and then catches and reflects something of his atmosphere and spirit.

Le Tourneur's skill in a fairly literal rendering of poetry and of oratory will be readily seen by a glance at his version of one of Ariel's songs in *The Tempest*, and the beginning of Antony's famous speech over the body of Cæsar.¹

¹ "Amis, Romains, Compatriotes, prêtez moi l'Oreille. Je viens pour inhumer César, non pour le louer. Le mal que font les hommes vit après eux : le bien est souvent enseveli avec leurs cendres. Qu'il en soit ainsi de César.—Le noble Brutus vous a dit que César fut ambitieux : s'il fut tel, c'étoit une faute grave et César l'a rigoureusement expiée. — Ici, de l'aveu de Brutus et des autres, car Brutus est un homme d'honneur, et tous les autres aussi sont des hommes d'honneur, je viens pour parler aux funérailles de César. Il étoit mon ami, il fut fidèle et juste envers moi ; mais Brutus dit qu'il étoit ambitieux et certes Brutus est un homme d'honneur.—César a ramené dans Rome une foule de captifs, dont les rançons ont rempli les coffres publics ; est-ce en

In the matter of style, Shakespeare, in his journey across the Channel, inevitably suffered a "sea change" into something which was "strange" at least, if not "rich." Le Tourneur's desire to be exact, and at the same time to make his author speak a language pure and noble as befitted the ideal of the French classic ce point qu'il parut ambitieux? Lorsque les pauvres gémissaient, César pleuroit. L'ambition seroit formée d'une trempe plus dure. Cependant Brutus dit qu'il étoit ambitieux, et Brutus est un homme plein d'honneur.— Vous avez tous vu qu'aux Lupercales trois fois je lui présentai une couronne de Roi, et que trois fois il la refusa. Étoit-ce là de l'ambition? Mais Brutus dit qu'il étoit ambitieux et sûrement Brutus est homme d'honneur. Je ne parle point pour désapprouver ce que Brutus a dit, mais je suis ici pour dire ce que je sais.— Vous l'aimiez tous autrefois, et ce ne fut pas sans cause: quelle cause vous empêche donc aujourd'hui de pleurer sur lui?— O discernement tu as fui chez les brutes grossières, et les hommes ont perdu leur raison!— Soyez indulgent pour moi: mon cœur est là, dans ce cercueil avec César: jusqu'à ce que je l'ai rappelé à moi, il faut que je m'arrête.— Act III. Scene 6. Vol. I. p. 289.

"À cinq brasses sous les eaux ton Père est gisant.
 Ses os revivent changés en corail pur.
 Où furent ses yeux deux perles brillent.
 Rien de lui n'est flétrri dans le tombeau.
 Tout en lui a ressenti la puissance de la mer,
 Et s'est revêtu d'une substance précieuse et nouvelle.
 D'heure en heure les nymphes de la mer tintent son glas.
 Écoute! J'entens leurs sons, dont les ondes bourdonnent."

— Vol. I. p. 53, Act I. Scene 5.

stage, resulted in a style which was often, as his critics justly remarked, neither Shakespearian nor yet distinctively French. In his effort to render Shakespeare in the "style noble" he forgot, or failed to see, that one of the most striking characteristics of the English poet is his simplicity of expression. In Le Tourneur's rendering he is often elegant, wordy, bombastic. "A man" frequently becomes "un guerrier"; "a horse," "un coursier"; "a church," "un temple." The witches in *Macbeth* are "magiciennes," the devil "l'oracle des enfers." The watch dog and the hunting dog appear as "l'espèce qui fait sentinelle, l'autre qui lance le gibier dans les forêts." A bold figure of speech becomes often a colorless and conventional expression, as :

"Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid."

— *Macbeth*, I. 3.

"Ni nuit, ni jour le sommeil ne reposera sur
sa paupière."¹

Many pages could easily be filled with similar and even worse examples of inadequacy, both

¹ Cited by Beljame, *Macbeth*, texte critique, Paris, 1897, Introd.

in accuracy and in style. But as a whole, Le Tourneur's prose is generally clear, and has a certain bombastic dignity which too often degenerates into feebleness and awkwardness, but which, at times, rises to a rhythmical march, through which faintly echoes the majesty of Shakespeare's stately verse.

But instead of dwelling upon detached phrases and single sentences, it will be of more service in gaining an idea of Le Tourneur's style as a whole, to consider his translation of longer and more complete passages. For the sake of showing his power of rendering a difficult selection it may be interesting to compare his translation of the celebrated monologue in *Hamlet* with an earlier version, Voltaire's, and a later one, that of François Victor Hugo, in 1859.

Voltaire's version, printed in the *Lettre sur la Tragédie*,¹ is as follows :

“ Être ou n'être pas, c'est là la question ;
S'il est plus noble dans l'esprit de souffrir
Les piqûres et les flèches de l'affreuse fortune,
Où de prendre les armes contre une mer de trouble,
Et, en s'opposant à eux, les finir ? Mourir, dormir,
Rien de plus, et par ce sommeil dire : Nous terminons

¹ *Lettres Philosophiques*, Paris, 1784.

Les peines du cœur, et dix mille chocs naturels
 Dont la chair est héritière ; c'est une consommation
 Ardemment désirable, Mourir, dormir :
 Dormir, peut-être rêver ! Ah ! voilà le mal !
 Car dans ce sommeil de la mort, quels rêves aura-t-on,
 Quand on a dépouillé cette enveloppe mortelle ?
 C'est là ce qui fait penser : c'est là la raison
 Qui donne à la calamité une vie si longue :
 Car qui voudrait supporter les coups et les injures du
 temps,
 Les torts de l'opresseur, les dédains de l'orgueilleux,
 Les angoisses d'un amour méprisé, les délais de la justice
 L'insolence des grandes places et les rebuts
 Que le mérite patient essuie de l'homme indigne,
 Quand il peut faire son *quietus*
 Avec une simple aiguille à tête ? qui voudrait porter ces
 fardeaux,
 Sangloter, suer sous une fatigante vie ?
 Mais cette crainte de quelque chose après la mort,
 Ce pays ignoré, des bornes duquel
 Nul voyageur ne revient, embarrassé la volonté,
 Et nous fait supporter les maux que nous avons,
 Plutôt que de courir vers d'autres que nous ne connais-
 sons pas.
 Ainsi la conscience fait des poltrons de nous tous :
 Ainsi la couleur naturelle de la résolution
 Est ternie par les pâles teintes de la pensée.
 Et les entreprises les plus importantes,
 Par ce respect, tournent leur courant de travers,
 Et perdent leur nom d'action."

Perhaps the best criticism of this is in Voltaire's own words: "Il est bien aisé de rap-

porter en prose les sottises d'un poète, mais très difficile de traduire ses beaux vers."

Le Tourneur renders thus:

"Être ou ne pas être? c'est là la question. . . . S'il est plus noble à l'âme de souffrir les traits poignans de l'injuste fortune, ou, se révoltant contre cette multitude de maux, de s'opposer au torrent, et les finir? Mourir — dormir — Rien de plus, et par ce sommeil, dire: Nous mettons un terme aux angoisses du cœur, et à cette foule de plaies et de douleurs, l'héritage naturel de cette masse de chair. . . . ce point, où tout est consommé, devroit être désiré avec ferveur. — Mourir. — Dormir. — Dormir! Rêver peut-être: oui, voilà le grand obstacle: — car de savoir quels songes peuvent survenir dans ce sommeil de la mort, après que nous nous sommes dépouillés de cette enveloppe mortelle, c'est de quoi nous forcer à faire une pause. Voilà l'idée qui donne une si longue vie à la calamité. Car quel homme voudroit supporter les traits et les injures du temps, les injustices de l'opresseur, les outrages de l'orgueilleux, les tortures de l'amour méprisé, les longs délais de la loi, l'insolence des grands en place, et les avilissans rebuts que le mérite patient

essuie de l'homme sans âme ; lorsqu'avec un poinçon il pourroit lui-même se procurer le repos ? Qui voudroit porter tous ces fardeaux et suer et gémir sous le poids d'une laborieuse vie, si ce n'est que la crainte de quelque avenir après la mort. . . . Cette contrée ignorée dont nul voyageur ne revient, plonge la volonté dans une affreuse perplexité, et nous fait préférer de supporter les maux que nous sentons, plutôt que de fuir vers d'autres maux que nous ne connoissons pas. Ainsi la conscience fait de nous tous des poltrons ; ainsi tout le feu de la résolution la plus déterminée se décolore et s'éteint devant la pâle lueur de cette pensée. Les projets enfantés avec le plus d'énergie et d'audace, détournent à cet aspect leur course et retournent dans le néant le l'imagination." — Vol. III. p. 119.

Finally, Hamlet's speech, after the wave of the Romantic Movement had passed over France, emerges as follows from the hands of François Victor Hugo :

" Être ou ne pas être, c'est là la question. — Y a-t-il plus de noblesse d'âme à subir — la fronde et les flèches de la fortune outrageante — ou bien à s'armer contre une mer de douleurs et

à l'arrêter par une révolte ? Mourir . . . dormir, — rien de plus ; . . . et dire que par ce sommeil nous mettons fin — aux maux du cœur et aux mille tortures naturelles — qui sont le legs de la chair : c'est là un dénouement qu'on doit souhaiter avec ferveur. Mourir . . . dormir, — dormir ! peut-être rêver ! Oui, là est l'embarras. — Car quels rêves peut-il nous venir dans ce sommeil de la mort, — quand nous sommes débarrassés de l'étreinte de cette vie ? — Voilà qui doit nous arrêter. C'est cette réflexion là — qui nous vaut la calamité d'une si longue existence. — Qui, en effet, voudrait supporter les flagellations et les dédains du monde, — l'injure de l'opresseur, l'humiliation de la pauvreté, — les angoisses de l'amour méprisé, les lenteurs de la loi, — l'insolence du pouvoir et les rebuffades — que le mérite ré-signé reçoit d'hommes indignes, — s'il pouvait en être quitte — avec un simple poinçon ? Qui voudrait porter ces fardeaux, — grogner et suer sous une vie accablante, — si la crainte de quelque chose après la mort, — de cette région inexplorée, d'où — nul voyageur ne revient, ne troublait la volonté, — et ne nous faisait supporter les maux que nous avons — par peur de

nous lancer dans ceux que nous ne connaissons pas? — Ainsi la conscience fait de nous tous des lâches: — ainsi les couleurs natives de la résolution — blémissent sous les pâles reflets de la pensée; — ainsi les entreprises les plus énergiques et les plus importantes, — se détournent de leur cours, à cette idée, — et perdent le nom d'action." — Vol. III. *Le Second Hamlet*, Scene 8, p. 239.

Voltaire's version is clear and accurate, Le Tourneur's feeble and inexact, Hugo's lacks distinction. No one of the three adequately represents the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. It is true that this is a passage of unusual depth and difficulty, and one which has been the delight and despair of many a student, actor, and translator. As an example of an entirely different kind may be taken a passage of pure love poetry, the farewell of Romeo and Juliet. Le Tourneur renders thus:

JULIETTE

Veux-tu donc, déjà me quitter? Le jour est encore loin de paroître: c'étoit le rossignol et non l'alouette, dont la voix a frappé ton oreille inquiète. Toute la nuit il chante là-bas

sur ce grenadier; crois-moi mon Amant: c'étoit le rossignol.

Roméo

C'étoit l'alouette qui annonce l'aurore, et non pas le rossignol: vois, ma bien-aimée, ces traits de lumière, jaloux de notre bonheur, qui percent ces nuages vers l'Orient: tous les flambeaux de la nuit sont éteints; et le riant Matin sur la cime des monts nébuleux, un pied levé, se balance, prêt à s'élancer. Il me faut ou partir et vivre, ou rester et mourir.

JULIETTE

Non, cette clarté n'est point le jour; j'en suis sûre: c'est quelque météore qu'exhale le Soleil pour te servir de flambeau cette nuit, et t'éclairer dans ta route vers Mantoue. Demeure encore un moment; tu ne partiras point si tôt.

Roméo

Hé! bien! qu'on me surprenne ici, qu'on me conduise à la mort: je suis content si tu le veux ainsi. Je dirai comme toi, que cette lueur griseâtre n'est pas celle du matin, mais le pâle reflet de la Lune, et que ce n'est pas l'alouette dont les accents s'élèvent et vont frapper la voûte

des cieux. Ah ! crois-moi, j'ai bien plus de penchant à rester, que de volonté de partir. Hé ! bien ! que la mort vienne, la mort sera la bien venue : Juliette le veut ainsi. Qu'en dis-tu mon amour ? Allons, causons ensemble : non, ce n'est pas le jour.

JULIETTE

Ah ! c'est le jour, c'est le jour : pars de ces lieux, éloignes-toi, fuis. Oui c'est l'alouette qui pousse ces accents discords ; que sa voix est aiguë et son chant désagréable ! (x) Oh ! pars sans délai : la lumière croît de plus en plus.¹

ROMÉO

Oui, la lumière croît . . . et nos maux vont croître avec elle.

— Vol. IV. p. 361, *Roméo et Juliette*, Acte III. Scène 7.

¹ The (x) marks an omission in Le Tourneur. He translates the omitted verses in a note at the end of the play.

(x) Scène 7, p. 362.

“On dit quelquefois : l'alouette fait une douce séparation. Il n'en est pas de même de celle-ci ; car c'est elle qui nous sépare aujourd'hui ; on dit aussi que l'alouette et le crapaud ont troqué d'yeux ; oh ! je voudrois qu'ils eussent aussi troqué de voix aujourd'hui.”

“Allusion au proverbes populaire sur les yeux brillants du crapaud et les yeux ternes et petits de l'alouette.”

Hugo's translation is as follows:

JULIETTE

Veux-tu donc partir? Le jour n'est pas proche encore: C'était le rossignol et non l'alouette—dont la voix perçoit ton oreille crainitive. Toutes les nuits il chante sur le grenadier, là-bas. Crois-moi, Amour, c'était le rossignol.

ROMÉO

C'était l'alouette, la messagère du matin,— et non le rossignol. Regarde, Amour, ces lueurs jalouses — qui dentellent le bord des nuages à l'Orient!—Les flambeaux de la nuit sont éteints, et le jour joyeux — se dresse sur la pointe du pied au sommet brumeux de la montagne. — Je dois partir et vivre, ou rester et mourir.

JULIETTE

Cette clarté là-bas n'est pas la clarté du jour, je le sais bien, moi ;—c'est quelque météore que le soleil exhale — pour te servir de torche cette nuit et éclairer ta marche vers Mantoue. Reste donc, tu n'as pas besoin de partir encore.

ROMÉO

Soit! qu'on me prenne, qu'on me mette à mort.—Je suis content, si tu le veux ainsi.

— Non, cette lueur grise n'est pas le regard du matin — elle n'est que le pâle reflet du front de Cynthia ; — et ce n'est pas l'alouette qui frappe de notes si hautes la voûte du ciel au-dessus de nos têtes. J'ai plus le désir de rester que la volonté de partir. — Vienne la mort, et elle sera la bienvenue. . . . Ainsi le veut Juliette. . . . Comment êtes-vous, mon âme ? Causons, il n'est pas jour.

JULIETTE

C'est le jour, c'est le jour ! Fuis vite, vatt'en, pars. — C'est l'alouette qui détonne ainsi, — et qui lance ces notes rauques, ces strettes déplaisantes. — On dit que l'alouette prolonge si doucement les accords; cela n'est pas, car elle rompt le nôtre. — On dit, que l'alouette et le hideux crapaud ont changé d'yeux. — Oh ! que n'ont-ils aussi changé de voix, — puisque cette voix nous arrache effarés l'un à l'autre — et te chasse d'ici par son hourvari matinal ! — Oh ! maintenant, pars. Le jour est de plus en plus clair.

ROMÉO

De plus en plus clair. . . . De plus en plus sombre est notre malheur.

— F. V. Hugo, Vol. VII. p. 314.

It is easy to find fault with Le Tourneur's translation, and a detailed study of his rendering of the individual plays confirms the first impression. It is often inaccurate and inadequate. It contains omissions, amplifications, and changes of the original text. Its style is frequently grandiloquent and bombastic where it should be dignified and simple, indistinct and elegant where it should be clear-cut and forceful. Nevertheless, it has virtues which atone for its many and serious defects. It presents Shakespeare in his entirety for the first time in French, with an adequate introduction of literary appreciation. It is made with a conscientious effort at exactness and a scrupulous care, which, however far from attaining their end, should excite the respect and indulgence of modern scholarship. It catches and preserves again and again something of Shakespeare's atmosphere and spirit. And as, with all its inaccuracies, Florio's translation of Montaigne is preferred by many to the more exact and modern renderings, so, this eighteenth-century translation of Shakespeare, with all its mistakes and frequent bombast is, in some respects, nearer the spirit of the original than the more literal interpretations of later scholars.

As in the case of *Les Nuits d'Young*, and of the *Poésies d'Ossian*, Le Tourneur's translation of Shakespeare soon became the standard, and remained, indeed, the only complete version of the English poet until well on into the nineteenth century. A new edition was brought out in 1821, revised and corrected by Guizot,¹ and a third, the following year, edited by Avenel.² Twelve years later Havard edited it with the works of Schiller,³ and in 1899 it was reprinted by Charles Vogel for an edition of Shakespeare made for the *Bon Marché*,⁴ with the remark in the preface that this translation seemed the best to the editor, and he therefore intended to use it, despite the criticisms of other translators who sought to discredit it in

¹ *Shakespeare, Œuvres complètes traduites par Le Tourneur.* Nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée par F. Guizot et A. P. (Pichot), traducteur de Lord Byron. Paris, 1821, 13 vols. in 8vo.

² *Œuvres de Shakespeare, traduites de l'anglais par Le Tourneur.* Nouvelle édition corrigée et enrichie de notes de divers commentateurs sur chaque pièce, par M. Avenel. Paris, 1822, 12 vols.

³ *Œuvres dramatiques de Shakespeare, traduites de l'anglais, par Le Tourneur.* Nouvelle édition. Paris, 1884, 2 vols. in 8vo.

⁴ *Shakespeare, revue de la traduction de Le Tourneur,* par Charles Vogel, Paris, 1899.

order to advance their own work. This unqualified approbation was the general feeling of the eighteenth-century press in regard to Le Tourneur's work. With the exception of the partisan attacks of the *Journal Politique*¹ and the *Mercure*² the translator was praised for the beauty and energy of his style and for his fidelity to Shakespeare. For this last quality, indeed, he was even gently censured, as well as for hazarding too bold and too inelegant expressions.³ By succeeding translators, however, he was treated with much greater severity, and M. Beljame,⁴ in particular, cannot forgive such expressions as "déterminé comme un rat sans queue." — *Macbeth*, Act I. Scene 3.

But in any judgment of this first translation of Shakespeare it must be remembered, not only that it was pioneer work, and thus liable to the imperfections of all first attempts, but that an exact, literal translation of Shakespeare was

¹ *Journal de Politique et de Littérature*, 1776, Vol. I. p. 43; Vol. II. p. 597. 1777, Vol. III. p. 531, 1778, Vol. I. p. 25, 96, 150, etc.

² *Mercure de France*, May, 1781; July, 1782.

³ *Année Littéraire*, 1786, Vol. II.

⁴ *Macbeth*, texte critique, par A. Beljame, Paris, 1897. The Introduction contains a very severe appreciation of Le Tourneur.

neither thought of nor desired. Its value lies not in its intrinsic merit as a translation, but in the fact of its existence, in its immediate effects upon the French people, and in its later influence upon the stage. Le Tourneur knew his public and his time. He dared to do what no one before him had ventured and what no one after him attempted for over forty years. His translation did its work. It made the French acquainted with Shakespeare, it aroused interest in him and his work, and its influence was an important factor in the later development of French drama. These services alone should be enough to atone for many imperfections and mistakes, and to secure for Le Tourneur the indulgence and gratitude of the modern student.

The discussion carried on in the different periodicals during the publication of the translation had its effect. Imitators and commentators came forward to express their opinions and to demonstrate their approval or disapproval of Shakespeare's dramatic methods. Ducis continued his adaptations with *Le roi Lear* in 1783, *Macbeth* in 1784, *Jean sans Terre* in 1791, and *Othello* in 1792, and by a singular irony of fate replaced Voltaire in the Academy of the Im-

mortals. Sedaine, who read with eagerness and delight the translation of Le Tourneur as fast as it appeared, could talk of nothing else, and his enthusiasm called forth the often-quoted remark of Grimm: "Vos transports ne me surprennent point, c'est la joie d'un fils qui retrouve un père qu'il n'a jamais vu."¹ Mercier, who had been one of the first and most enthusiastic admirers of Shakespeare and who had already proposed certain bold reforms in the French drama in his *Essai sur l'Art Dramatique* of 1773, continued his efforts by attempting to put his theories into practice in *Timon d'Athènes* (1794).² After the death of Voltaire, his campaign against Shakespeare was carried on by Marmontel, d'Alembert, La Harpe, and Marie Joseph Chénier, who supported fiercely the rules and methods of the classic French drama in theory and in practice, and only grudgingly accorded a few sparks of genius to the English poet. The

¹ Auger, *Notice sur Sedaine* in his *Oeuvres*, Paris, 1813, Vol. I. p. xi.

² Other imitators of Shakespeare at this period were Le-gouvé, whose *Épicharis et Néron* (1793) echoed Act V. of *Richard III.*, Déjaillé, whose *Imogènes ou la Gageure indiscrète* (1796) imitated *Cymbeline*, Bertini in *Othello*, 1785, De Rozoi in his *Rhapsodie de Richard III.*, 1782.

general feeling towards the end of the century of the more enlightened partizans of Shakespeare is well expressed by Fréron in the *Année Littéraire*.

“Les ouvrages inspirés par le génie, quelques défauts qui les défigurent, ont toujours un grand avantage sur les productions froides et polies de l'esprit. Ils offrent des idées neuves et originales, des choses hardies et sublimes; on y rencontre partout les traits d'une imagination libre et vigoureuse qui crée, qui invente, et s'élance au delà des bornes prescrites. Des beautés de ce genre rachètent bien des absurdités, et sont beaucoup plus utiles au progrès de l'art que les écrits médiocres, qui n'ont d'autre mérite qu'une forme régulière, un tour élégant et délicieux. Une seule scène de Shakespeare éclaire plus un artiste que cette foule de tragédies où toutes les règles sont observées scrupuleusement hors la plus essentielle, qui est d'intéresser et de plaire. Je ne prétends pas justifier les irrégularités monstrueuses du poète Anglois; mais ses pièces quelque bizarres qu'elles soient, présentent aux écrivains qui ont plus de goût que d'invention, un répertoire immense de caractères et de situa-

tions vraiment tragiques. Ces matériaux précieux mis en œuvre par une main habile pourroient enrichir notre théâtre, dans un temps surtout où nos auteurs dramatiques se plaignent qu'ils sont venus trop tard, et que tous les sujets sont épuisés. La traduction de Shakespeare envisagée sous ce point de vue, a donc un objet d'utilité très considérable, et peut être regardée comme une ressource contre la stérilité et la disette qui afflagent depuis longtemps la scène Françoise" (*Année Littéraire*, 1778, Vol. VII. p. 78.) Even Mme. de Staël, so enthusiastic about northern poetry, found Shakespeare often lacking in taste, though she recognized and boldly declared his power and beauty as a dramatist. "Depuis les Grecs jusqu'à lui, nous voyons toutes les littératures dériver les unes des autres, en partant de la même source. Shakespeare commence une littérature nouvelle ; il est empreint sans doute, de l'esprit et de la couleur générale des poésies du Nord, mais c'est lui qui a donné à la littérature des Anglais son impulsion, et à leur art dramatique son caractère."¹ In her intelligent and sympathetic study of Shakespeare, she counseled

¹ *De la Littérature*, 1800, Chap. III.

reform in the French drama, and the imitation of his freedom from restraint of rules and fidelity to life. Yet, far from exalting him to the skies with the unreasoning adoration of some of his early admirers, she proposed a reasonable medium between both systems of composition.¹

Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, even the most enlightened opinion concerning Shakespeare was not essentially very different from that expressed by Voltaire half a century before. Shakespeare has no taste; he has no regard for the unities; he minglesthe comic and the tragic in the same drama; he introduces scenes of violence and characters of the lower classes, he makes each character speak as befits him, and not according to the dignity and nobility suited to tragedy. But with all these defects he is a great genius of unquestioned power and inimitable beauties. His faults are those of his time. He lived in a

¹ *De la Littérature*, Chap. XIII. *Des Tragédies de Shakespeare*, 3d edition, 1818, Vol. I. p. 522.

“Enfin, pour ouvrir une nouvelle source d’émotions théâtrales, il faudrait trouver le genre intermédiaire entre la nature de convention des poètes français et les défauts de goût des écrivains du Nord.”

rough and barbarous age, and wrote to please an uncultivated people. Chateaubriand, one of the last ardent supporters of the classic ideal, compared him to a Gothic cathedral, which may please by the very deformity of its proportions, but which no one would think of imitating as a model of architecture.¹

From 1800 to 1820 the question of the respective merits of the two dramatic systems was still discussed by Geoffroy,² Lemercier,³ Mme. de Staël and Ch. de Rémusat.⁴ In 1821 Guizot's new and revised edition of Le Tourneur's translation and his remarkable preface⁵ showed that a revolution was at hand. Critics and imitators of Shakespeare followed thick and fast; and such works as Stendhal's de-

¹ *Essai sur Shakespeare*, 1801, in *Oeuvres complètes* 1836, Vol. VIII. p. 56. *Mélanges littéraires*: "un monument gothique peut plaire par son obscurité et par la difformité même de ses proportions mais personne ne songe à bâtir un palais sur son modèle."

² *Journal des Débats*, *Cours de littérature dramatique*, Paris, 1819.

³ *Dramas and Prefaces*, *Cours analytique de littérature générale*. *Cours de littérature dramatique*.

⁴ *Révolution du Théâtre*, 1820; reprinted in *Passe et Present*, *Mélanges*, Paris, 1847.

⁵ *Shakespeare*, *Oeuvres*, traduites par Le Tourneur, revues par Guizot, Paris, 1821, 13 vols.

tailed study of Racine and Shakespeare,¹ translations of separate plays, and the utterances of such men as Alfred de Vigny, Victor Hugo, Sainte Beuve, and Lamartine prepared the way for the revolutionary theories of dramatic art in the preface to *Cromwell* in 1827. The great change in taste, so long and slow in coming, had at last arrived. *Hernani* (1830), and *Marion Delorme* (1831), were played and welcomed. The pendulum of public opinion in favor of Shakespeare swung completely round, and under the influence of the Romantic Movement, he became the "god of the theater."

In 1829 Alfred de Vigny's translation of *Othello* was performed at the Théâtre Français, and in the same year Émile Deschamp's *Études Poétiques Françaises et Étrangères* supported and developed the ideas and theories promulgated by Vigny and Hugo. Imitations, translations, and critical studies multiplied rapidly. Chateaubriand, somewhat converted from his earlier opinion, devoted a long article to Shakespeare in his essay on English literature in 1836.²

¹ *Racine et Shakespeare*, par Stendhal, Paris, 1823.

² *Chateaubriand, Œuvres complètes*, Paris, 1837, Vols. XXXIII and XXXIV.

George Sand translated *As You Like It* and made a study of *Hamlet*;¹ Stapfer investigated Shakespeare's relation to the Ancients;² Mézières³ and Lamartine⁴ devoted entire volumes to his life and works; Lacroix, Jusserand, and Lounsbury studied his appreciation and influence in France. Meantime modern and complete translations have not been wanting. Revised editions of Le Tourneur's rendering appeared in 1821, 1822, and 1834. A new and complete version by Francisque Michel⁵ was published in 1839, and another by Benjamin Laroche⁶ in 1844. François Victor Hugo⁷ produced a third in 1859, and the latest, that of Émile Montégut,⁸ is of 1867.⁹

¹ George Sand, *Comme il vous plaira*, 1856.

² Stapfer, Paul, *Shakespeare et l'Antiquité*, Paris, 1879-1880.

³ Mézières, Alf, *Shakespeare, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, Paris, 1860.

⁴ Lamartine, *Shakespeare et son Œuvre*, Paris, 1865.

⁵ Shakespeare, *Œuvres*, traduites par M. Michel, Paris, 1839.

⁶ Shakespeare, *Œuvres complètes*, traduites par Benjamin Laroche, Paris, 1844.

⁷ Shakespeare, *Œuvres complètes*, traduites par F. V. Hugo, Paris, 1859.

⁸ Shakespeare, *Œuvres complètes*, traduites par Émile Montégut, Paris, 1867.

⁹ As this essay was going to press the attention of the

The war was practically over by 1840. Shakespeare had at last found a home in France and has now his place on the French stage.¹ He is no longer considered a rough and uncouth barbarian, but is welcomed as an honored and respected guest. Nevertheless, he is, and must continue to be, a stranger, alien in blood, opposed in feeling and expression to the tradition of the Latin races. There is now no discussion as to his merit or his taste; his dramatic methods are no longer questioned; his effect upon the French drama is undoubted. In helping to free it from writer was called to the announcement of a new translation of Shakespeare : *Œuvres dramatiques de William Shakespeare : traduction nouvelle, entièrement conforme au texte anglais, avec annotations*, par Georges Duval, 8 vols., Paris, 1908.

¹ Among the more modern adaptations of Shakespeare for the stage may be noted : *Hamlet* by Paul Meurice and Alexandre Dumas (1847), in which Mounet Sully achieved one of his great triumphs at the Théâtre Française; *Macbeth* and *Le roi Lear*, by Jules Lacroix, performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1863 and 1888; *Othello*, by Jean Aicard (1881), *Le Conte d'Avril* (founded on *Twelfth Night*), by Auguste Dorchain (1885); *Macbeth*, by Jean Richepin, Porte-Saint Martin (1884); *Shylock*, by Edmond Haraucourt (1890), and *La Méger apprivoisée* by Paul Delain (1894). Sarah Bernhardt's impersonation of Hamlet is still a recent memory, and the summer of 1907 witnessed repeated performances before crowded houses at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, of a version of *King Lear* by Pierre Loti.

the fetters of classicism, in giving it new life, and in enlarging its boundaries, his influence was a factor of importance in the history of the development of dramatic taste and art. For the acceleration of this change, Le Tourneur, by giving to France the first complete translation of Shakespeare, by his keen insight and appreciation, and by his thorough and conscientious work, must be held in no small degree responsible.

VI. CONCLUSION

THE way of the translator, like that of the transgressor, is apt to be hard. His is an obscure and thankless task. His work rarely satisfies either the friends of his author or the critics of his own nation. His translation may be used and widely known and it is proportionately abused. If he himself is remembered at all, it is generally for his vices, not his virtues. His preparation is arduous, his labor difficult, his glory and recognition small. He must understand his author, know him thoroughly, sympathize with him. Like an actor, he must sink his own personality as far as possible and represent him conscientiously, appropriately, and adequately, in spirit and in speech. In the beginning he is beset by serious difficulties. If he translates literally and word for word, he renders the sense and loses the spirit of his original; if freely, he is accused of inaccuracy or ignorance. Whatever his method, however great his care, he finds the standard of perfection retreating before him as he advances,

and himself assailed by the critic alike for what he did and for what he did not do. His work may be poor or excellent, it may or may not accomplish its end; in either case, the translator himself generally sinks into obscurity; his personality, his years of effort and labor are forgotten.

This fate has overtaken Pierre Le Tourneur. To most, he is but a name,—the translator of Young, Ossian, and Shakespeare. He and his works are alike buried in the darkness of oblivion which is penetrated only by the inquiring student and scholar. Even when these curious and hardy adventurers into the mysterious land of dead and forgotten writers have roused him from his long slumber, it has been, generally, to greet him with unsparing criticism on his work, tempered with condescending indulgence for himself. His work, as a whole, has been characterized as "bad," "poor," "mediocre." He has been accused of timidity and lack of initiative, of carelessness and infidelity in his translations, of bombast and grandiloquence in his style, of ignorance of the English tongue. But he deserves more indulgent treatment at the hands of posterity and merits a better fate than

that which has befallen him. The qualities of his life and work which make him worthy of being rescued from oblivion have already been suggested in the foregoing pages. It will be sufficient here to summarize them very briefly.

Le Tourneur's importance and interest in the history of literature lie in three things : in his work, in his ideas, and in his personality. His work, as has been seen, consists of original essays and of translations. The former, while graceful and promising attempts, are too slight to have any great influence upon his final reputation. Nevertheless, they won him a place in public esteem and thus prepared the way for a favorable reception of his later work. He is known to-day, and rightly, as a translator. By his translations of Young, Hervey, and Ossian he introduced to France the English School of the literature of melancholy which did much to accelerate and increase the influence of the Romantic Movement. His rendering of Shakespeare made known for the first time the English poet to the French people, established for him a firm foothold in France, and powerfully affected the future development of the French drama. His minor translations furthered still more the cause of

literary cosmopolitanism by extending the knowledge of foreign literature, and stimulating interest in the productions of other nations.

Like many another workman for posterity, Le Tourneur builded better than he knew. He was not only a translator, but, what was perhaps more important at the time, an interpreter of literature. He possessed, in a rare degree, the power of appreciation; he had a breadth of view, a tolerance, a clear and keen judgment, far in advance of most other critics of his age. These very gifts enabled him to understand his public and the temper of the time in which he lived. He realized clearly what he could and what he could not venture in the way of literary initiative. He had, moreover, the editor's instinct of selection and arrangement, and the insight and the skill to present a literature entirely opposed in thought, in taste, and in expression to his own, in such a way that it was acceptable and pleasing to his countrymen. His translations are of value, not because of their intrinsic merit, but because of what they represent: the first beginnings of a phase of cosmopolitanism which was later to become a mighty influence in European literature. Like beauty, their existence is

their own excuse for being. Viewed from the standpoint of the modern scholar, they are very unsatisfactory as translations, and most of the criticisms passed upon them are just. They are sometimes poor, often inaccurate, they have many sins of omission and commission in the way of liberties taken with the text, and yet, they do catch and reflect the essential spirit and atmosphere of their originals. A large part of their worth lies in their very imperfections. They did their work, they fulfilled their purpose. They made known to the French people the English authors they tried to represent. It is, indeed, a question whether an accurate and complete rendering would have brought about the same results; whether, if presented, then, in their entirety, Young, Ossian, and Shakespeare would have been welcomed, or even received, in France; whether, in short, the change in taste would have taken place when and as it did, and finally, whether the development of literary cosmopolitanism would not have been perceptibly retarded.

Le Tourneur, however, was more than a translator and interpreter. By the novelty and boldness of his ideas, he belongs to the ranks of

theorists and innovators. The fact of his undertaking and completing entire translations of these alien poets shows an appreciation and judgment beyond that of most of his contemporaries. It is true that in so doing he was merely following the fashion of the hour, the rage for everything English which had taken possession of France. But where most people were content with little or no accurate knowledge, he made an attempt at something like a scholarly and complete treatment of his subject. Unlike the greater part of his countrymen he understood his authors, and appreciated the value of his own work in introducing them to his country. In his prefaces, above all, he gave expression to his new theories and startling ideas. He revealed to France, in the first place, a sane and sensible view of literature, and suggested a liberal tolerance with respect to standards of taste and excellence different from those of generally accepted tradition. He spoke against a slavish adherence to the unities, and a blind and hampering obedience to rules. He proclaimed the independence and the power of genius, the vitality and naturalness of the English stage, the good effects of mingling the

comic and the tragic, of taking subjects from all classes of men, of making each character speak a language appropriate to himself. He protested against the tyranny of criticism and tradition, against the pettiness and narrowness of critics who try to measure everything by their own small capacity and rule. He pleaded for breadth of view in literature, declaring boldly that France was not the only nation endowed with genius, and that perfection was not confined within her boundaries. He urged the development of cosmopolitanism, the utility of exchange in literature as well as in commerce. He was the first to use and to define the word *romantique*, which has since become an ordinary term in literary speech. These ideas and theories, regarded by his contemporaries as startling and chimerical innovations destined to work havoc in the perfection of classic drama, and to bring ruin and destruction upon the stage, have since been accepted without question as commonplaces of literary criticism and structure. But such a change as made this acceptance possible did not take place without a struggle, and Le Tourneur, as one of the pioneers in the campaign, bore the brunt of

the battle and was responsible for much of the progress made.

His share and influence in the great evolution and expansion of taste which was going on at the close of the eighteenth century was due, in part, to his personal qualities and attributes. Throughout his life he was known to be of blameless character and spotless reputation. He had many friends and few enemies. He was recognized as an original writer of marked ability, as a critic of sound judgment, keen insight, just appreciation, and unquestioned good taste. His opinions were listened to with respect, and his work received with approbation. He was known to be thorough and conscientious, free from envy, malice, and ambition, seeking only as his reward the consciousness of work well done. Under the fire of abuse and persecution which the novelty of his work and the hardihood of his ideas brought upon him, he stood firm and resolute, completing his task with quiet dignity, calm persistence, and unabated energy, and trusting, with unshaken faith, to the value of his work as his only vindication and his sole revenge. His insight was not mistaken nor his confidence misplaced. His work

stood the test and his efforts were justified by the results. He did his work thoroughly and well, and left behind him translations which became the standard, ideas and theories destined to aid in the revolution of taste and dramatic structure, and the memory of a gracious and pleasing personality. Of Pierre Le Tourneur, who introduced Young, Ossian, and Shakespeare into France, whose work accelerated materially the slow but inevitable march of the Romantic Movement, whose keen judgment and just appreciation did much for the spread of cosmopolitanism and literary civilization, whose personal charm impressed all who knew him, it may be said with Antony of Brutus :

“ His life was gentle ; and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, *This was a man !* ”

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF LE TOURNEUR'S WORKS

1766. *Éloge de Clairaut.*
in Nécrologie des hommes célèbres de France,
Paris, 1766.

1768. Discours Moraux couronnés par les Académies de Montauban et de Besançon en 1766 et 1767 avec un *Éloge de Charles V., Roi de France*, par *Mxxx.* Sens et Paris. 176 pp.

1769. *La Jeune Fille Séduite et Le Courtisan Ermite*, contes traduits de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur. 50 pp.

1769. *Les nuits d'Young*, traduites de l'anglois par Le Tourneur. Paris. 2 vols. in 8vo. et in 12mo.

1770. *Œuvres diverses d'Young*, traduites de l'anglois par Le Tourneur. Paris. 2 vols. in 8vo.

1770. *Méditations d'Hervey*, traduites de l'anglois par Le Tourneur. Paris. 8vo.

1771. *Histoire de Richard Savage*, suivie de la Vie de Thomson, traduites de l'anglois, par M. Le Tourneur. 400 pp. 12mo.

1771. *Histoire du règne de l'empereur Charles Quint*, précédée d'un tableau des progrès de la Société en Europe, traduite de l'anglois. 6 vols. in 12mo. (Vols. III et IV are by Le Tourneur.)

1771. *Choix de Contes et de Poésies érites*, traduits par Pierre Le Tourneur. Paris. 2 vols. in 12mo.

1776-83. Shakespeare, traduit de l'anglois, dédié au Roi. 20 vols. in 8vo.

1777. Ossian, fils de Fingal poésies galliques, traduites sur l'anglois de Macpherson par Le Tourneur. Paris. 2 vols. in 8vo.

1778. Éloge du Maréchal du Muy par Le Tourneur. Paris. 178 pp.

1779. Vue de l'Évidence de la Religion Chrétienne, considérée en elle-même, traduite de l'anglois par M. Le Tourneur.

1784. Le Sylphe, traduit de l'anglois. Genève et Paris. 1 vol. in 8vo.

1784. Histoire d'Angleterre, représentée par Figures, accompagnées d'un Précis Historique. Les Figures gravées par David. Paris. 2 vols. in 4to.

1785. Choix d'Élégies de l'Arioste, traduites de l'Italien par M. Le Tourneur. Paris.

1785-86. Clarisse Harlowe, traduction nouvelle et seule complète par M. Le Tourneur. Genève et Paris. 10 vols. in 8vo.

1787. Voyage au Cap de Bonne Espérance et autour du Monde avec le Capitaine Cook, par André Sparrman. Traduction par M. Le Tourneur. 3 vols. in 8vo.

1787. Voyage en Allemagne dans une suite de Lettres, par M. le Baron de Riesbeck, traduites de l'anglois. 3 vols. in 8vo.

1788. Mémoires intéressans, par Une Lady, traduits de l'anglois par feu M. Le Tourneur. Londres et Paris. 1 vol. in 8vo.

1788. Vie de Frédéric, Baron de Trenck, traduite de l'Allemand par M. Le Tourneur. Berlin and Paris. 1788. 3 vols. in 8vo.

1778. Voyage à Ermenonville.
in Œuvres Complètes de Rousseau. Paris. 1788.
Vol. I.

1788. Le Jardin Anglois, ou Variétés tant originales que traduites par feu M. Le Tourneur. 2 vols. in 8vo.

1779-1789. Histoire Universelle depuis le commencement du monde jusqu'à présent, par une Société de Gens de Lettres. 120 vols.

1789. Le Nord du Globe, traduit de l'anglois de M. Pennant. 2 vols. in 8vo.

NOTE. — L'Histoire de Mlle. de Sirval, ou le Triomphe du Sentiment, is wrongly attributed by Ersch to Le Tourneur. It is by M. Tournon (1760-1794), de l'Académie d'Arras.

APPENDIX B

HERVEY AND MONTAIGNE

“Legions, Legions of Disasters such as no Prudence can foresee, and no Care prevent, lie in wait to accomplish our Doom. A starting Horse may throw his Rider; may at once dash his Body against the Stones, and fling his soul into the invisible World. A Stack of Chimnies may tumble into the Street and crush the unwary Passenger under the ruins. Even a single Tile, dropping from the Roof, may be as fatal as the Fall of the whole Structure. So frail, so very attenuated is the Thread of Life, that it not only bursts before the storm, but breaks even at a Breeze. The most common Occurrences, those from which we suspect not the least Harm, may prove the Weapon of our Destruction. A Grapestone, a despicable Fly, may be more mortal than Goliath, with all his formidable Armour. Nay, if God give command, our very Comforts become killing. The air we breathe is our Bane, and the Food we eat, the Vehicle of Death. That last Enemy has unnumbered Avenues for his Approach, Yea, lies intrenched in our very Bosom, and holds his Fortress in the Seat of our Life. The crimson Fluid, which distributes Health, is impregnated with the Seeds of Death, Heat may inflame it, or Toil oppress it, and make it destroy the Parts it was designed to cherish. Some unseen Impediment may obstruct its Passage, or some unknown Violence may divert its Course, in either

of which Cases, it acts the Part of a poisonous Draught, or a deadly Stab." —HERVEY, *Meditations among the Tombs*, London, 1759, Vol. I. p. 29.

This passage was obviously suggested by Montaigne's chapter "Que philosophe, c'est apprendre à mourir." —Bk. I. Chap. XIX.

"Combien à la mort de façon de surprisne! à tous instants représentons la à notre imagination, et en tous visages, au broncher d'un cheval, à la chute d'une taille, à la moindre piqûre d'épinglé" . . . "l'autre mourut d'un grain de raisin."

"L'eau, la terre, l'air et le feu et aultres membres de ce mien bastiment ne sont non plus instrumens de la vie qu'instrumens de la mort."

Le Tourneur renders:

"Ah! quelle foule de dangers et d'écueils imprévus, inévitables, assiègent notre frêle existence! Un coursier fougueux renverse son cavalier, et l'écrase sur la pierre. Un édifice s'écroule, et ensevelit les passans sous ses ruines, une ardoise fatale se détache du toit, tombe et nous tue; L'atome le plus léger peut détruire la constitution la plus robuste. Que dis-je? la mort est dans l'air que nous respirons, dans l'aliment qui nous nourrit, dans le sang qui nous anime. Le repos nous est mortel comme le travail, nous périssons d'abondance comme de besoin, partout la mort s'insinue et circule dans les sources mêmes de la vie." p. 103.

APPENDIX C

LE COMTE DE CATUÉLAN

“Le comte de Catuélan, très versé dans la langue anglaise avait fait une excellente traduction du théâtre de Shakespeare qu'il voulait faire imprimer. Elle fut mise à la censure de M. Letourneur. Celui-ci s'occupait précisément à cette époque de traduire ce même ouvrage, dont il comptait tirer le plus grand profit, et fut fort étonné d'avoir été prévenu aussi cruellement. Il traînait en longueur la lecture du manuscrit, différait son approbation sous divers prétextes, lorsque M. de Catuélan, apprenant le véritable motif de ces lenteurs, alla le voir, et lui dit fort honnêtement que ne voulant point se trouver en concurrence avec un littérateur aussi éclairé, encore moins lui enlever les avantages qu'il devait naturellement retirer de son travail, et auxquels lui-même n'aspirait pas, il venait reprendre son manuscrit, ou le lui céder sous la modique rétribution de quelques exemplaires. M. Letourneur, accepta avec beaucoup de reconnaissance cette seconde proposition : il dénatura en quelques endroits le style du traducteur, ajouta quelques notes, et mit son nom à la tête de l'ouvrage¹ dont il retira toute la gloire et le profit. . . . *Sic vos non vobis.*”

¹ This is an error. The letter of dedication to The King in Vol. I. is signed by le comte de Catuélan, Le Tourneur, and Fontaine Malherbe.

Dugast de Bois-Saint Just: *Paris, Versailles et les Provinces au 18^e siècle*, Paris, 1811, 3d edition.
3 vols. Vol. 2, p. 130.

“MM. le Comte de C . . . et Le T. se disposent à mettre incessamment sous presse, à Paris, une traduction fidelle du théâtre complet de Shakespeare; ils ont fait leurs efforts pour exécuter de leur mieux, une entreprise aussi difficile, et qu'ils croient digne d'intéresser le public. La traduction est achevée; mais ils ne plaindront ni le tems, ni les soins pour approcher, le plus qu'il leur seroit possible, de l'exactitude et de la perfection; et leur but principal est de montrer à leur nation Shakespeare tel que le voyent les Anglois.” — *Journal Encyclopédique*, August, 1772, Vol. V. p. 427.

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLES OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CRITICISM OF LE TOURNEUR'S TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE

1. "Voici un endroit où l'on remarque de la noblesse, de la vérité et de la passion; c'est au moment où l'on vient pour arrêter Othello après le meurtre de Desdemona. On a fermé les portes sur lui, il veut sortir, l'épée à la main. Gratiano lui répond qu'on s'y opposera, et paroît à la porte. Voici ce que lui dit Othello :

Lo ! I have a weapon.
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh. I've seen the day
That with this little arm and this good sword
I've made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop. But oh ! vain boast !
Who can control his fate ? 'Tis not so now.
Be not afraid though you do see me weaponed.
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
The very seacemark of my utmost sail.
Do you go back dismay'd ? 'Tis a lost fear :
Man but a rush against Othello's breast
And he retires. Where should Othello go ?
Now, how dost thou look now ? O ill-starr'd wench !
Pale as thy smocks ! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,

And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl,
Even like thy chastity. O cursed slave!
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight.
Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
Wash me in steep-down gulphs of liquid fire,
Oh! Desdemona! Desdemona! dead! dead! Oh! Oh!

“ Ce morceau est beau. Les traducteurs l'ont très fidèlement rendu, mais n'auroient-ils pas pu accorder un peu mieux l'exactitude de la version, avec la correction du langage et avec la simplicité élégante qui n'auroit rien dérobé des beautés de Shakespeare? Voici comme ils ont traduit:

“ Vois, j'ai une épée, jamais arme plus sûre *ne reposa sur la cuisse d'un soldat*. J'ai vu le tems où avec ce *foible bras et cette bonne épée*, je me serois fait jour à travers des obstacles vingt fois plus puissans que ceux que tu m'offres. Mais ô vaine bravade! qui peut surmonter sa destinée? Il n'en est plus de même. Ne t'effraye point de me voir une arme à la main; je suis au terme: voici la borne de ma carrière, l'écueil où finit ma dernière course. Tu recules de peur! Va, *tu perds tes allarmes*. *Qu'un bras* seulement menace le sein d'Othello, et il va fuir. Où iroit Othello? Maintenant, dans quel état t'offres-tu à moi, malheureuse enfant née sous une étoile fatale? Pâle comme tes linceuls! Quand nous nous rencontrons au jour du jugement, *cet aspect précipitera mon âme des cieux*, et soudain les démons se saisiront d'elle.— Froide, froide! ô douce victime! calme comme ton innocence! Scélérat maudit! *Prenez vos fouets, furies, frappez, dépossédez-moi de cet objet céleste.* Lancez-moi dans les tourbillons glacés, plongez-moi dans des torrens

de soufre, au fond de vos brasiers dévorans. O Desdémone ! Desdémone ! morte, morte ! Oh ! oh !'

"Ceux qui ont quelque connoissance de l'Anglois s'apercevront aisément, que sans nuire en rien à la fidélité on pourroit donner à cette traduction le ton noble et soutenu que comportoit l'original en cet endroit. Il ne faut point, sans doute, orner Shakespeare, puisqu'on veut le faire connoître : mais il ne faut point le gâter. Qu'est-ce que cette expression grotesque d'une arme *qui repose sur la cuisse d'un soldat* ? Il est vrai que le mot *thigh* est dans le texte, mais les Traducteurs savent si bien nous dire que beaucoup de mots qui sont bas dans notre langue ne le sont pas dans celle des Anglois. Ils l'ont tant dit à M. de Voltaire, qui, pourtant, n'avoit traduit d'une manière basse que ce qui étoit bas partout. Ici ce n'étoit pas la même chose. C'est une délicatesse particulière à notre langue, que de ne pas admettre dans le style noble des mots qui expriment certaines parties du corps que les anciens et les modernes ne craignoient pas de nommer dans un Poème, et Shakespeare s'est servi du mot *thigh*, comme Virgile du mot *crus*. Mais le sens n'auroit-il pas été tout aussi bien rendu sans ce mot de *cuisse*, qui pour des oreilles Françoises, gâteroit la plus belle phrase ? En eut-il coûté beaucoup de substituer ceci : *Jamais arme plus sûre ne fut dans la main d'un soldat* ? Ailleurs, c'est la langue qui est offensée. *Perdre ses alarmes* ! ce langage est-il tolérable ? Il y a dans l'original, *'tis a lost fear* : mot à mot : *la crainte est perdue*. Mais ce mot *lost, perdue*, est ici le synonyme de superflue. Rien n'étoit si simple que de traduire : *tes alarmes sont vaines* : et ce qu'il y a de pis, c'est, qu'au lieu du mot propre qui se présente de lui-même, les Traducteurs ont été chercher bien loin des barbarismes étrangers, et se sont

donné beaucoup de peine pour faire mal. C'est une remarque qui s'offre à tout moment à l'esprit en lisant leur Shakespeare.

“*Qu'un bras seulement menace le sein d'Othello : Pourquoi cette tournure bizarre, un bras ? Il y a dans l'Anglois *man*, *un homme*, qui vaut beaucoup mieux : qu'un homme lève le bras contre Othello, et Othello va fuir.*¹ Voilà la phrase de l'Auteur Anglois. Que dirons-nous de cet aspect qui *précipitera mon âme* et des furies qui prennent leurs fouets pour *déposséder* ? Tout cela est dans l'Anglois, il est vrai, mais c'est ici le cas où la lettre tue ; et des expressions plus justes et plus françoises n'auroient pas été moins exactes.

“Voilà bien des fautes dans un seul morceau, et c'est un des meilleurs de Shakespeare : qu'on juge si le reste est mieux travaillé. M. M. Le Tourneur et Compagnie auroient dû louer moins leur Auteur et le traduire mieux.”

—*Journal de Politique et Littérature*, Mai, 1778.

It is interesting to note that eighty years later, François Victor Hugo, in his translation of *Othello*, retained the objectionable *cuisse* and boldly rendered “ton apparition *précipitera mon âme du ciel.*”— Vol. V. p. 380, *Othello*, Scene 16.

“C'est en rendant avec soin ces beautés réelles qui font le mérite de Shakespeare, que les Traducteurs auroient beaucoup mieux travaillé pour sa gloire, qu'en exaltant ses défauts. Ils ont annoncé hautement que pour la première fois on verroit Shakespeare, tel

¹ This is a case of the blind leading the blind. *Man* in the English text means, of course, not a *man*, but is the verb, *to arm against*, *to threaten with*.

qu'il étoit ; ils se sont vantés de la fidélité la plus scrupuleuse. Il est pourtant vrai, que souvent ils ont masqué également, et ses beautés et ses défauts. . . . Il s'en faut de beaucoup que les traducteurs ayent été aussi fidèles qu'ils se piquent de l'être : Mais qu'importe que de mauvaises choses soient mal traduites ? . . . Il y a plus ; c'est, que par un contraste assez maladroit, ils ont cru souvent rendre la naïveté et l'énergie de l'Auteur, par des tournures triviales ou baroques ; et quand il falloit nous montrer sa grossièreté telle qu'elle étoit, ils se sont permis plus d'une fois de l'annoblir, et de le farder mal à propos. Je n'en veux qu'un exemple tiré de la Scène onzième du second Acte d'Othello. Cette Scène se passe dans le Corps de Garde : on boit, on chante, et les chansons doivent être dignes du lieu. C'est Shakespeare tout pur ; il n'y avoit nulle raison pour l'orner. Voici le couplet que les Traducteurs mettent dans la bouche d'Iago :

“ Dans la bassesse où tu respires,
N'affecte point l'orgueil d'un vêtement nouveau.
L'orgueil renverse les empires :
Sois humble, et prends sur toi ton antique manteau.

“ Je ne sais pas pourquoi ces Messieurs ont voulu faire une ode de ce couplet de la Halle. Ils ont manqué à la fidélité sans autre fruit que de rompre l'unisson de la Scène qui est du ton de la Chanson Angloise.” — *Ibid.*, June, 1778.

“ On en dira ce qu'on voudra, il nous falloit un Shakespeare complet avec ses perles et son fumier *in sterilimio margaritas*.

“ Ayez-le, c'est d'abord ce que vous lui devez,
Et vous l'estimerez après si vous pouvez.

“ Il seroit même injuste de ne pas estimer un génie si original, un peintre si énergique d'une nature, qui, à la vérité, n'est ni choisie ni ornée, dans lequel on trouve, après tout, de grands modèles du tragique en tout genre, et qui, présentant des objets souvent affreux et dégoûtants, mais toujours vrais, révolte souvent, mais n'ennuie jamais. Nous en disons trop peut-être pour les Lecteurs François et nous n'en disons certainement pas assez pour des Lecteurs Anglois. Shakespeare fait toujours, et partout, leurs délices et ils ne conçoivent pas plus nos froides et nos dégoûts à l'égard de certaines scènes de ce Poète, que nous ne concevons leur continue admiration et leur méprisable enthousiasme. C'est une chose vraiment remarquable que cette différence, ou plutôt cette opposition de goût entre deux Nations si voisines, et toutes deux si éclairées. Au reste, tout est dit depuis longtemps sur ce sujet.

“ Le Henri VIII. de Shakespeare prouve que cet Auteur savoit mettre dans ses portraits autant d'adresse que de vérité; c'est véritablement un tour de force que d'avoir traité ce sujet d'une manière qui pût plaire à la Reine Elizabeth, placée, comme elle l'étoit, entre un père dont elle vouloit respecter la mémoire et une mère à qui ce père cruel avoit fait trancher la tête.

“ Le traduction fait de l'effet: elle est donc bonne, et elle manquoit. Le Traducteur devroit, pourtant, s'abstenir de certaines expressions recherchées, de certains tours bizarres qui n'appartenoient point à la Langue. Pourquoi des plaintes *irrespectueuses*? Pourquoi cette expression *naufragée* sur un ‘Royaume où il n'y a ni pitié,’ etc., et cette autre: ‘Si nous nous conduisons avec cette molle foiblesse, et que nous nous laissons sur-

mener par un manteau d'écarlate.' Pourquoi cette formule d'optatif qui n'est point dans la Langue, et qui revient très souvent dans cette Traduction? 'Ah! que cela *fût à faire encore!*' Tandis qu'il est si aisé de dire en bon François: *Ah! que cela n'est-il encore à faire?*

“‘C'est beaucoup plus que je ne puis consentir.’ Cette phrase n'est point correcte.

“‘*Je ne suis pas assez grande pour être votre Reine, et je le suis trop pour être votre concubine.*’

“Ce mot de Lady-Gray à Edouard IV. est le mot connu de Catherine de Rohan à Henri IV. *Qu'elle étoit trop pauvre pour être sa femme, et de trop bonne Maison pour être sa maîtresse;* mais il est mal exprimé dans la Traduction, *et je ne suis pas assez grande,* n'est pas un tour heureux.” — *Mercure de France*, July, 1782.

APPENDIX E

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EDITIONS

ABBREVIATIONS: Bib. Nat. = Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
Brit. Mus. Cat. = British Museum Catalogue.

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 Voyage à Ermenonville, par feu M. Le Tourneur, pour
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 Notes de J. J. Rousseau sur sa Nouvelle Héloïse.
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(This is a reprint of an anonymous edition published by Pissot & Desaint, Paris, 1767, which has been attributed to Mme. de Montessan, to Rose, and to Charles. (Barbier & Quérard.) The style of the translation is unlike that of Le Tourneur and it is probably due to an error that his name appears on the cover of the edition of 1837.)

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INDEX

<p>Addison, 49, 156.</p> <p><i>Affiches, Annonces et Avis divers</i>, 12 n.</p> <p>Aicard, Jean, 251 n.</p> <p>d'Aiguillon, la duchesse, 89.</p> <p><i>Amants Malheureux, Les</i>, by Bacular d'Arnaud, 174.</p> <p><i>l'Amitié</i>, 107.</p> <p><i>Ammingait et Ajut</i>, 105, 106.</p> <p><i>Amours de Groenland, Les</i>, 105.</p> <p><i>Andromaque</i>, 164.</p> <p>Anglomania, 156; growth in France, 161-162.</p> <p><i>Année Littéraire, Choix de Contes</i>, 108; <i>Clarissa Harlowe</i>, 133, 134, 135, 147, 148; <i>Discours Moraux</i>, 30; Hervey's <i>Meditations</i>, 87; Le Tourneur's death, 13; epitaph, 15; Ossian, 91; Shakespeare, 213, 214, 215, 216, 245; <i>Voyage au Cap de Bonne Espérance</i>, 139; Young's <i>Night Thoughts</i>, 71.</p> <p><i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>, 224.</p> <p><i>Apologie de Shakespear (sic) en réponse à la critique de Voltaire</i>, by Mrs. Montague, 207 n.</p> <p><i>Arctic Zoology</i>, by Thomas Pennant, 11, 140-142.</p> <p>d'Argental, le comte, death,</p>	<p>14; subscriber to translation of Shakespeare, 178; Voltaire's letters to, 194-197, 200.</p> <p><i>Argillan, ou le Fanatisme des Croisades</i>, by Fontaine-Malherbe, 177 n.</p> <p>Ariosto, 4, 99, 135-137, 151 n.</p> <p>Aristotle, 186.</p> <p>d'Arnaud, Bacular, 173, 174 n.</p> <p>Arnauld, Oscar, <i>Fils d'Ossian</i>, 98 n.</p> <p>Arnoult, <i>Le Baron de Trenck ou le prisonnier prussien</i>, 147 n.</p> <p><i>As You Like It</i>, 250.</p> <p><i>Atala</i>, by Chateaubriand, 75.</p> <p><i>Athalie</i>, 206.</p> <p><i>Author, The</i>, by Charles Churchill, 110, 113.</p> <p><i>L'Avant Coureur, Le Courtisan Hermite</i>, 45; Hervey, 87.</p> <p>Avenel, 241.</p> <p><i>Babillard, Le</i>, 211-213.</p> <p>Baour-Lormian, 97.</p> <p><i>Bardes, Les</i>, by Lesueur, 98 n.</p> <p>Baretti, Joseph, 207.</p> <p>Barine, Arvède, 96 n.</p> <p><i>Barmécides, Les</i>, by La Harpe, 205 n.</p> <p>Barré, translation of <i>Clarissa Harlowe</i>, 134 n.</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Beljame, Alexandre, 229 n, 242.
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 251 n.
 Bertin, *Satyres d'Young*, 73 n.
 Bertini, *Othello*, 244 n.
Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts, Hervey, 87; Shakespeare, 176, 217.
Biographia Britannica, 51.
 Bissy, le comte de, 47.
 Bock, le baron de, 146.
 Boissy, Louis de, 162 n.
Bonheur, Le, 107.
Briefe einer reisenden Franzosen über Deutschland, an seinen Brüder an Paris, 144 n, 145 n, 146 n.
Briefe über das Mönchswesen, by Gaspar Riesbeck, 144 n.
 Brumoy, Père, 212.
 Buffon, 14, 141 n.
 Burnouf, 6.
Busiris, by Edward Young, 67.
Cadet de Famille, Le, by Fontaine-Malherbe, 177 n.
Candidate, The, by Charles Churchill, 110 n.
 Canfield, Dorothea, 163 n.
 Carré, Jérôme, 191.
Carthon, translated by the Duchesse d'Aguillon, 89.
Cathuélina, 151 n.
 Catuélan, le comte de, 177, Appendix C.
 Cellini, 147.
Centaur not Fabulous, The, by Edward Young, 66, 70.
 Cesariotti, translation of Ossian, 94, 97.
Chants de Selma, Les, by Ossian, 98.
 Charles II., court of, 181 n.
Charles V., Eloge de, by La Harpe, 27 n, 28; by Le Tourneur, 21, 27-30, 33; Robertson's *History of*, 4, 92, 104, 109, 113.
 Chasles, Philareète, 166.
 Chateaubriand, influence of Ossian in his *Atala*, 75; *René*, 75; *Génie du Christianisme*, 98; Shakespeare, 248, 249.
 Châtelet, Mme. du, 31 n.
 Chénier, André, 147 n.
 Chénier, Marie Joseph, 244.
Choix de Contes et de Poésies éreses traduits de l'anglois par Le Tourneur, 90, 92 n, 104-106, 108 n, 113 n.
Choix d'Élégies de l'Arioste, traduites de l'italien par M. Le Tourneur, 135-137.
Choix de Lettres de Lord Chesterfield, by Peyron, 86 n.
Christianisme, Examen de l'évidence intrinsèque du, 114 n.
 Churchill, Charles, 110.
Cid, Le, 163.
Cinna, 190, 205 n.
Cinque Canti, Le, by Ariosto, 137, 152.
 Clairaut, Alexandre, 30 n; *Éloge de*, 30-32, 151 n.
Clarissa Harlowe, 4, 11, 17, 104, 125-135, 146, 147, 152, 218.
 Clément, Nicholas, 155, 160.
Cléopatra, 167, 170.
Collection de poèmes anglois, italiens, allemands, espagnols, by Peyron, 86 n.
 Collini, 144 n.
 Collins, 46.
Comédie larmoyante, 170.
Comme il vous plaira, by George Sand, 250 n.

Confidences, Les, by Lamartine, 98.
Congreve, 86 n., 181 n.
Conjectures sur la Composition Originale, by Edward Young, 67, 68.
Conjon, M. de, 15.
Conlath, 89.
Connal et Crimora, 88 n.
Conte d'Avril, Le, by Auguste Dorchain, 251 n.
Contemplations on the Night, by Hervey, 77.
Contemplations on the Starry Heavens, by Hervey, 77.
Corinne, by Mme. de Staël, 75.
Coriolanus, 213 n., 224.
 Corneille, admired Lucan, 71; genius compared to that of Shakespeare, 190; great dramatist, 158, 192, 193, 195, 200; in England, 163; Le Tourneur's likeness to, 19; Shakespeare preferred to, 162, 196, 204, 205; Shakespeare in country of, 180; Voltaire's commentary on, 203.
Corneille and Racine in England, by Dorothea Canfield, 163 n.
Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, by Grimm, Diderot, 73 n., 89 n., 208 n.
Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire, Eloge de du Muy, 34-37; Le Tourneur's Letter, 197.
Cours analytique de littérature générale, by Lemercier, 248 n.
Cours de littérature, by La Harpe, 95 n.

Cours de littérature dramatique, by Geoffroy, 248 n.
Cours de littérature dramatique, by Lemercier, 248 n.
Courtisan Hermite, Le, 44, 45.
Cromwell, 249.
Curiosités Bibliographiques, 47 n.
Cuthona, translated by the Abbé Suard, 89.
Cymbeline, 167 n., 170 n., 224; imitated by Déjauré, 244 n.

D'Alembert, defends Corneille and Racine, 201, 207, 244; reads Voltaire's letter to the Academy, 201, 202; sur l'art de traduire, 59 n.
Dar Thula, 89.
Davenant's Tempest, 157 n.
 David, 116.
Dedication to M. Voltaire, Young's, 65.
 Defoe, 156.
 Déjauré, imitation of *Cymbeline*, 244 n.
 Delain, Paul, 251 n.
 De Rozoi, 244 n.
 Deschamps, Émile, 249.
Description of a Night in October, Ossian's, 90.
 Desmoulins, Camille, 75.
 Déspreaux, 181 n.
 Destouches, Néricaud, 156-158, 162.
Dialogues between Theron and Aspasia, by James Hervey, 77 n.
 Diderot, 72, 73 n., 127, 208 n.
Discant on Creation, A, Hervey's, 77.
Discours Moraux, Le Tourneur's, 3, 4, 7, 8, 21-27, 28, 30, 32, 43, 44, 151.

Discours sur la Poésie Dramatique, Marmontel's, 173.

Discours sur la Tragédie à l'occasion des Machabées, etc., by Houdard de la Motte, 158 n.

Disquisitions on Several Subjects, by Jenyns, 114 n.

Dissipateur, Le, by Destouches, 157.

Distressed Mother, The, 184.

Dorchain, Auguste, 251 n.

Douin, translated *Othello*, 174 n.

Drouais, 14.

Dryden, 157, 181.

Du Bellay, 170.

Ducis, 2, 170–174; *Hamlet*, 2, 171–172; *King John*, 172, 243; *King Lear*, 172, 243; *Macbeth*, 172, 243; *Othello*, 172, 243; *Romeo and Juliet*, 2, 172; replaces Voltaire in Academy, 243.

Duclos, César René Guyot, 13.

Dumas, Alexandre, 251 n.

Duval, Georges, 251 n.

Ebert, 76.

l'École des Pères, by Fontaine-Malherbe, 177 n.

Elegy, Gray's, 84–86.

Éloge de Charles V., roi de France, by Le Tourneur, 21, 27–30, 33; by La Harpe, 27 n., 28.

Éloge de Clairaut, 30–31, 151 n.

Éloge du Maréchal du Muy, by Le Tourneur, 32–37, 151.

Éloge de Richardson, Diderot's, 127.

English drama, French ignorance of, 155; slow development in France, 164–165.

Épicharis et Néron, by Legouvé, 244 n.

Épitre à Lord Lansdowne, Young's, 67.

Épitre aux Pauvres, by Fontaine-Malherbe, 177 n.

Épitre à Voltaire, Le Tourneur's, 65.

Ermenonville, Voyage à, Le Tourneur's, 37–42.

Erschenburg, 221.

Essay on Dramatic Art, Mercier's, 170, 173, 209 n., 244.

Estimation de la Vie, 67.

Etudes Poétiques Françaises et Étrangères, by Émile Deschamps, 249.

Études sur Shakespeare, by Philharète Chasles, 166 n.

Eudoxie, ou le beau projet de solitude, 105–106, 108.

Euripides, 186, 201, 215.

Eusebe, 65, 66, 70.

Fidélité, La, 135, 137.

Fingal, 88 n., 89.

Florio, 240.

Fontaine-Malherbe, 31, 32 n., 177 n.

Fontanes, 96.

Foscolo, Ugo, 76.

Fouquet, 155.

Fourbe, Le, Congreve's, translated by Peyron, 86 n.

Fragment of Ancient Poetry, 88 n.

François II., by Président Hénault, 170.

Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil, Jenyns's, 114 n.

French drama in England, 163.

Fréron, 71, 245.

Frivolité, La, 161, 162 n.
Funérailles d'Arabert, Les,
 86 n.

Garrick, 171, 181 n, 204, 205,
 208 n.

Gazette littéraire, 89 n.

Génie du Christianisme, by
 Chateaubriand, 98.

Gentleman's Magazine, 51 n.

Geoffroy, 248.

Gerbier, 14.

Gerville, 6.

Geschichte der Deutschen, by
 Riesbeck, 144 n.

Gessner, 14.

Girodet-Trioson, 98 n.

Glück, 14.

Goethe, 97.

Gotham, by Charles Churchill,
 110 n.

Grave Yard School of poets,
 46, 102.

Gray, 46, 84–86.

Greek Theatre, by Père Brumoy, 212.

Grimm, 72, 73 n; account of
 Shakespeare quarrel, 208–
 209; on Sedaine, 244.

Grou, Auguste, 13.

Guillot, Félix, 5.

Guizot, 221, 241, 248 n.

Haller, Bertholde Frédéric,
 145 n.

Hamlet, Ducis's, 2, 171; Hugo's,
 233–234; La Place's, 167 n;
 Le Tourneur's, 224, 232–
 233; Meurice's, 251 n; Pré-
 vost's, 162; Sand's, 250;
 Voltaire's, 230–231.

Hanmer, 184.

Haraucourt, Édmond, 251 n.

Hardy, Alexandre, 158.

Havard, 241.

Hénault, Président, 170.

Henry VI., 167, 215.

Hernani, 249.

Hervey, James, 4, 10, 73 n,
 77–84, 86–88, 92, 93, 99,
 101, 108, 113 n, 174, 176,
 192.

Hervieu, Anne, 6.

Histoire d'Angleterre, by Le
 Tourneur, 116–118.

Histoire de mes Idées, by
 Edgar Quinet, 98 n.

Histoire du règne de l'empereur Charles Quint, 113 n.

Histoire de Richard Savage, suivie de la Vie de Thomson, by Le Tourneur, 109 n.

Histoire de ma Vie, by George Sand, 98 n.

Histoire du Théâtre Français, by Hippolyte Lucas, 162 n.

Histoire Universelle, 116.

History of Charles V., Robertson's 4, 92, 104, 109, 113.

History of Quadrupeds, by Pennant, 141 n.

Homer, 89, 94, 97, 98.

L'Homme et la Femme sensibles, Mackenzie's, 86 n.

Hugo, François Victor, *Hamlet*, 230, 233–234, 235; *Romeo and Juliet*, 237–239; works of Shakespeare, 250.

Hugo, Victor, 249.

L'Influence de Shakespeare sur le Théâtre Français, by Albert Lacroix, 155 n.

Imogènes, ou la Gageure indiscrette, Déjauré's, 244 n.

Inés, by Houdard de la Motte, 158 n.

Jane Gray, Mme. de Staël's, 75.
Janin, Jules, 135.
Jardin Anglois, Le, ou Variétés tant originales que traduites, 4, 6, 21 n., 31 n., 32 n., 44, 120 n., 137, 151, 152.
Jenyns, Soame, 114.
Jerningham, 86 n.
Jeu, Le, 107.
Jeune Fille Séduite, La, 44, 45, 151 n.
Jeux de Calliope, 86 n.
Johnson, Samuel, 4, 111, 184, 220 n., 226 n.
Journal Anglois, 213.
Journal des Débats, 96 n., 248 n.
Journal Encyclopédique, 27 n.; *Discours Moraux*, 30 n.; *Ossian*, 91 n., 97 n.; *Savage*, 113 n.
Journal Étranger, 47, 88, 89.
Journal François, anglois et italien, 209, 210.
Journal générale de la France, 13 n.
Journal de Normandie, 13 n., 14, 15.
Journal de Paris, 12 n., 13 n., 16, 95, 96 n., 217.
Journal de politique et de littérature, 216, 242 n.
Journal des Savants, 26, 89 n., 177 n., 216.
Jours, Les, 73.
Julius Cæsar, La Place, 167 n., 170 n.; Le Tourneur, 176, 210, 224, 227, 228; Voltaire on, 190, 221.
Jusserand, J. J., 20 n., 155 n., 161 n., 185 n., 250.
Kind, John, Young in Germany, 76 n.

King John, 172, 243.
King Lear, Ducis, 172, 243; Lacroix, 251 n.; Le Tourneur, 224; Loti, 251 n.
Klopstock, 97.

La Bruyère, 108.
Lacroix, Albert, 155 n.
Lacroix, Jules, 251 n.
La Fontaine, 17.
La Fosse, 155.
La Harpe, Barmécides, 205 n.; directs *Journal de politique*, 217; defends Shakespeare, 207, 244; *Éloge de Charles V.*, 27 n., 28; *Menzicos*, 205 n.; *Ossian*, 95, 97; Voltaire's letter to, 201; *Young*, 71.
Lamartine, 75, 76, 98, 249, 250.
Landscape gardens, French and English compared, 38–39.
La Place, Antoine de, 2, 69, 163, 166–170, 171.
Laroche, Benjamin, 250.
La Rochefoucauld, 24.
Last Judgment, The, *Young*'s, 65, 66.
Lathmon, 90.
Lathmore, 89.
Le Blanc, l'Abbé, 162.
Legouvé, 244 n.
Lemercier, 248.
Leopardi, 76, 98.
Le Sage, 6.
Lesueur, 98 n.
Le Tourneur, Guillaume, 5.
Le Tourneur, Louis Eugène Félicien, 13.
Le Tourneur, Mme., 13.
Le Tourneur, Thomas, 6.
Letters, Hervey's, 78, 84.

Lettre sur la Tragédie, Voltaire's, 160 n., 230.

Lettres Angloises, 107, 108, 151 n.

Lettres Angloises, ou Histoire de Clarisse Harlowe, by the Abbé Prévost, 126.

Lettres sur l'Allemagne, 145 n.

Lettres sur les Allemands, by Collini, 144 n.

Lettres d'un François, 162 n.

Lettres Morales sur le Plaisir, 67, 70.

Lettres Philosophiques, Voltaire's, 2, 160, 230 n.

Lettres d'un Voyageur français sur l'Allemagne, 145 n.

Life and Letters of James Macpherson, by Bailey Saunders, 96 n.

Linnaeus, 138.

Littérature, De la, by Mme. de Staël, 97, 98 n., 246 n., 247 n.

Littérature, et des Littérateurs, De la, by Mercier, 209 n.

Lonce, Marguerite, 5.

Lounsbury, Thomas, 161 n., 185 n., 206 n., 208 n., 250.

Lucain, 71.

Lucas, Hippolyte, 162 n.

Luines, Cardinal de, 14.

Macbeth, Beljame, 229 n., 242; Ducis, 172, 243; Lacroix, 251 n.; La Place, 167; Le Tourneur, 224, 229, 242; Richépin, 251 n.; Voltaire, 203.

Machiavellism, 26.

Mackenzie, 86 n.

Macpherson, James, 88, 92 n., 94, 95, 96 n.

Mariages prématurés, Des, 107.

Marion Delorme, 249.

Marmontel, 104; *Discours sur la Poésie dramatique*, 173; campaigne vs. Shakespeare, 244; statements concerning Shakespeare, 180-181.

Maty, Paul Henry, *Travels in Germany*, 144 n.

Maupertuis, 31 n.

Méditations and Contemplations among the Tombs, by James Hervey, 77-84.

Méditations d'Hervey, traduites de l'anglois par Le Tourneur, 77.

Méditations, Lamartine's, 76.

Méditations in a Flower Garden, 86.

Mégère apprivoisée, La, by Paul Delain, 251 n.

Mélanges de Littérature, d'Histoire et de Philosophie, by D'Alembert, 59 n.

Mémoires intéressans par une Lady, 122-125, 151 n.

Mémoires secrets, 89 n.

Mémoires sociologiques et archéologiques de Valognes, 13 n.

Menzicof, by La Harpe, 205 n.

Mercier, Sébastien, *Essay on Dramatic Art*, 170, 173, 209, 244; friend of Le Tourneur, 12, 13, 16-18, 38; supports Shakespeare, 186, 209, 244; *Timon d'Athènes*, 244; *Tombeaux de Véronne*, 173.

Mercure de France, Le Courtisan Hermite, 45; *Night Thoughts*, 70, 71; Shakespeare, 216, 217 n., 242, Appendix D.

Merkwürdige Lebensgeschichte,

INDEX

by the Baron de Trenck, 146 n.

Merry Wives of Windsor, 167, 170.

Meurice, Paul, 251 n.

Mézières, Alfred, 250.

Michel, Francisque, 250.

Michiels, Alfred, *Histoire des Idées Littéraires en France au XIX^e Siècle*, 185 n.

Middleton, 138.

Milton, John, 26, 44, 46, 156.

Ministre Berger, Le, 105 n.

Ministre Philosophe, Le, 105 n.

Minona, Ossian's, 91.

Minvane, Ossian's, 90.

Molière, 158, 163, 180, 181, 204.

Montague, Mrs., 207, 221.

Montaigne 240, Appendix B.

Montégut, Émile, 250.

Montesquieu, 161.

Monthly Review, 50, 51, 65 n.

Montpellier, Tableau historique et descriptif, by E. Thomas, 74 n.

Morel, Léon, 113 n.

Motte, Houdard de la, 158-159.

Mounet Sully, 251 n.

Musset, Alfred de, 91, 98, 134 n.

Muy, Éloge du Maréchal du, 32-37, 151 n.

Namouna, 134 n.

Napoleon, 97.

Nécrologie des Hommes célèbres de France, 30, 31.

Night Thoughts, Young's, beauties and defects, 53-57; Le Tourneur's translation of, 57-65; named, 4, 15, 44, 46, 47, 48, 66, 76, 77, 78, 79, 174.

Nord du Globe, Le, 140-142, 151 n.

Nouvelle Héloïse, 126.

Nouvelles Lettres persanes, 86 n.

Nuits Angloises, Les, 73.

Nuits d'Young, Les, traduites de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur, 47, 50, 54, 55, 59, 67, 72, 73 n, 87, 88, 103, 133 n, 198, 241.

Nuits Parisiennes, Les, 73.

Oedipe, Voltaire's, 159.

Oeuvres Diverses du Docteur Young, traduites de l'Anglois par M. Le Tourneur, 47, 67-70.

Oithona, Ossian's, 89.

Oscar, Fils d'Ossian, 98 n.

Ossian, influence in France, 97-98; in Germany, 96-97; named, 3, 4, 11, 17, 101, 103, 126, 151 n, 218, 241, 254, 255, 257; translated into French by Le Tourneur, 90-96; by Suard and Turgot, 88-90.

Ossian, Fils de Fingal . . . Poésies Galliques traduites . . . par M. Le Tourneur, 92.

Othello, analyzed by La Place, 167; by Prévost, 162; imitated by Aicard, 251 n; Bertini, 244 n; translated by Douin, 174; Ducis, 172, 243; Le Tourneur, 210, 217, 224, 226, 270-274; Voltaire, 203; Vigny, 249.

Où trouver des Amis, 105 n.

Pamela, ou, la Vertu récompensée, 125.

Paradise Lost, 44, 151.
Paraphrase of Part of the Book of Job, Young's, 65, 66, 67 n.
Pascal, 53.
Passé et Présent, by Charles de Rémusat, 248 n.
Pelouze, 6.
Pennant, Thomas, 140-142, 151 n.
Pensées Angloises sur divers sujets de religion et de morale, 46.
Pensées sur divers sujets, 65, 66.
Persian Tales, 143 n.
Peyron, Jean François, 86.
Pinde monte, 76.
Plautus, 183.
Poetry of melancholy, 3, 46, 47, 75, 76, 77, 88, 98.
Pope, 49, 156, 184.
Pour et le Contre, Le, 162.
Prévost, l'Abbé, *Clarissa Harlowe*, 125-135, *passim*, 147; Shakespeare, 162.
Pujo s, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 32, 34.
Racine, *Andromaque*, 164; *Athalie*, 206 n; in England, 163; defended vs. Shakespeare, 200, 201, 204, 205; dramatist, 158, 181, 192, 193, 195, 196, 215; Shakespeare in country of, 180.
Racine et Shakespeare, by Stendhal, 248.
Rapidité de la Vie, La, by Fontaine-Malherbe, 177 n.
Reflections on a Flower Garden, Hervey's, 77.
Réflexions Historiques et Critiques sur les Différens | *Théâtres de l'Europe*, by Louis Riccoboni, 162 n.
Religion Chrétienne, De l'Évidence de la, traduit par Le Tourneur, 115 n.
Religion Chrétienne, Vue de l'Évidence de la, traduite par M. Le Tourneur, 114 n.
Rémusat, Charles de, 248.
René, Chateaubriand's, 75.
Resignation, The, Young's, 51 n, 65.
Revenge, The, Young's, 69 n.
Révolution du Théâtre, by Charles de Rémusat, 248 n.
Revue de la Vie, 65, 66.
Rhapsodie de Richard III., by De Rozoi, 244 n.
Riccoboni, 162 n.
Richard III., 167, 173, 244 n.
Richardson, Samuel, 46, 125-135, *passim*; Diderot's *Éloge de*, 127.
Richelieu, Duc de, 205.
Richépin, Jean, 251 n.
Riesbeck, Gaspar, 143, 144-146, 152.
Robertson, 104, 109, 113, 134 n, 135 n.
Robespierre, 75.
Rochester, 181 n.
Romantic movement, 3, 96, 102, 233, 249, 255.
Romantique, Le Tourneur's definition of, 184-185 n, 259.
Romeo and Juliet, Ducis's, 2, 172; Hugo's, 238-239; Le Tourneur's, 224, 235-237; Voltaire quotes from, 203.
Romule, by la Motte, 158 n.
Rosciad, The, by Churchill, 110 n.

Rousseau, J. J., 37 n, 38, 39, 40, 46.

Rousseau, J.-J., et le Cosmopolitanisme littéraire, by J. Texte, 75 n, 76 n, 96 n.

Rutlidge, le chevalier de, 209, 210–213 n.

Ryno et Alpin, 88 n.

Saint Évremond, 155.

Sainte Beuve, 249.

Saisons, Les, by James Thomson, 112 n.

Salvator Rosa, 185 n.

Sancy, M. de, 15.

Sand, George, 98, 250.

Satyres d'Young, ou, l'Amour de la Renommée, by Bertin, 73 n.

Saulé, Le, by A. de Musset, 91 n.

Saunders, Bailey, *Life and Letters of James Macpherson*, 96 n.

Savage, Richard, 4, 92, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113.

Schiller, 241.

Sea Piece, Young's, 65.

Sedaine, 244.

Sepolchri, by Ugo Foscolo, 76.

Sewell, 184.

Shaftesbury, 49.

Shakespeare, appreciation in France, 1, 154, 257; difficulties of translating, 165, 166; first references to in France, 155; first translations of, by Destouches, 156–158; Ducis, 170–173, 243; La Place, 163–170; introduced into France by Prévost, 162; Voltaire, 2, 159; Le Tourneur's translation of, 1, 3, 4, 11, 15, 17, 32, 37, 92, 95, 99, 103, 104, 133 n, 254, 255, 261; character of this translation, 225–230, 240; description, 175–189; extracts from, 227 n, 232–233, 235–237; purpose and method, 222–224; value, 242, 243; modern translations of, 241, 250, 251 n; separate plays, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 167 n, 170 n, 224; *As You Like It*, 250; *Hamlet*, Ducis, 2, 171; Hugo, 233–234; La Place, 167 n; Le Tourneur, 224, 232–233; Meurice, 251 n; Prévost, 162; Sand, 250; Voltaire, 230–231; *Henry VI.*, 167, 215; *Julius Cæsar*, La Place, 167 n, 170 n; Le Tourneur, 176, 210, 224, 227, 228; Voltaire on, 190, 221; *King John*, 172, 243; *King Lear*, Ducis, 172, 243; Lacroix, 251 n; Loti, 251 n; Le Tourneur, 224; *Macbeth*, Beljame, 229 n, 242; Ducis, 172, 243; Lacroix, 251 n; La Place, 167; Le Tourneur, 224, 229, 242; Richépin, 251 n; Voltaire, 203; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 167, 170; *Othello*, Aicard, 251 n; Bertini, 244 n; Douin, 174; Ducis, 172, 243; La Place, 167; Le Tourneur, 176, 210, 217, 224, 226, 270–274; Prévost, 162; Vigny, 249; Voltaire, 203; *Richard III.*, 167, 173, 244 n; *Romeo and Juliet*, Ducis, 2, 172; Hugo, 238–239; Le Tourneur, 224,

235-237; Voltaire quotes from, 203; *Tempest, The*, Destouches, 156, 157; Dryden and Davenant, 157 n; *Le Tourneur*, 176, 217, 224, 227, 228 n; quoted in *Le Sylphe*, 121; *Timon of Athens*, imitated by Destouches, 157 n; by Mercier, 244; translated by La Place, 167 n, 170 n; by *Le Tourneur*, 224; *Twelfth Night*, 251 n; sonnets, 152.

Shakespeare, traduit de l'anglois, dédié au Roi, 175 n, 226 n.

Shakespeare, revue de la traduction de Le Tourneur, par Charles Vogel, 241.

Shakespeare et l'Antiquité, by P. Stapfer, 250.

Shakespeare in France under the Old Régime, by J. Jusserand, 155 n, 156 n, 161 n.

Shakespeare, L'Influence de, sur le Théâtre Français, by A. Lacroix, 155 n.

Shakespeare, Œuvres de, traduites de l'anglois par Le Tourneur. Nouvelle édition . . . par M. Avenel, 241.

Shakespeare, Œuvres, traduites par Le Tourneur, revues par Guizot, 248.

Shakespeare, Œuvres, traduites par M. Michel, 250.

Shakespeare, Œuvres complètes, traduites par F. V. Hugo, 250.

Shakespeare, Œuvres complètes, traduites par B. Laroche, 250.

Shakespeare, Œuvres complètes, traduites par Le Tourneur.

Nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée par Guizot, 241.

Shakespeare, Œuvres complètes, traduites par Émile Montégut, 250.

Shakespeare, Œuvres dramatiques, traduites par Georges Duval, 251 n.

Shakespeare, Œuvres dramatiques, traduites par Le Tourneur, 241 n.

Shakespeare, Racine et, by Stendhal, 248, 249.

Shakespeare, sa Vie et ses Œuvres, by Mézières, 250.

Shakespeare, Voltaire and, by T. Lounsbury, 161 n, 185 n, 206 n, 208 n, 250.

Shakespeare, Works of, edited by Johnson and Steevens, 220 n, 226 n.

Shenstone, 151.

Shylock, by E. Haraucourt, 251 n.

Siege de Calais, Le, by Du Belloy, 170.

Smeatman, 138.

Sophocles, 183, 186, 201, 215.

Sparrman, André, 137-139, 144.

Staël, Mme. de, 75, 97, 98, 246-247, 248.

Stapfer, Paul, 250.

Steevens, George, 220 n, 226 n.

Stendhal, 248, 249.

Suard, l'Abbé, 89, 90, 113.

Swift, 49, 156.

Sylphe, Le, 118-122, 151 n, 152.

Tartuffe, Le, 163.

Tailler, The, 211.

Temora, Ossian's, 88 n, 93, 94.

Tems, Le, 107-108.

Texte, Joseph, 75 n, 76 n, 126 n.

Théâtre Anglais, by Jérôme Carré, 191.

Théâtre Anglois, Le, by A. de La Place, 69, 163, 167, 169.

Thomas, E., *Montpellier, Tableau historique et descriptif*, 74 n.

Thomas, W., *Le Poète, Edward Young*, 76 n.

Thomson, James, life of, 4, 92, 109, 110, 112, 113; *Les Saisons*, 112, 152.

Tibullus of Germany, the, 14.

Tombeaux de Véronne, Les, by Mercier, 173.

Tombo, Rudolf, *Ossian in Germany*, 96 n.

Traité des Passions, 67, 70.

Travels in Germany, by Paul Henry Maty, 144 n.

Trenck, Baron de, 146–151, 152.

Trenck, Frédéric baron de, *Merkwürdige Lebensgeschichte*, 146 n.

Trenck, *Le Baron de, ou le prisonnier prussien*, by Arnoult, 147 n.

Trenck, *La Vie de Frédéric, baron de*, translated by Le Tourneur, 146 n.

Trenck, *Vie de Frédéric, baron de*, by the Baron de Bock, 146.

True Estimation of Human Life, Young's, 70.

Turcaret, by Le Sage, 6.

Turgot, 88, 89.

Vaines, M. de, 201, 204 n.

Vallamprey, Pierre Vicq de, 5.

Valognes, 5, 6, 12, 13 n, 20 n.

Van Loo, Carl, 31.

Varités Littéraires, Suard's, 90 n.

Vega, Lopez de, 181 n.

Vengeance, La, 67.

Vigny, Alfred de, 249.

Vogel, Chasles, 241.

Voltaire, *Commentary on Corneille*, 203; comparison of *Julius Caesar and Cinna*, 190; *Dictionary*, 191; *Hamlet*, 230–231, 234; *Irène*, 207; Le Tourneur refers to, 27; Le Tourneur's *Épître à M. de Voltaire*, 65; Le Tourneur's reply to, 197–199; Letters to Academy, 201, 202–204, 206; d'Argental, 194–195, 200; Duc de Richelieu, 205 n; La Harpe, 201–202; M. de Vaines, 201, 204 n; *Lettres Philosophiques*, 2, 160, 230 n; *Edipe*, 159; on Ossian, 97; on Shakespeare, first impressions of, 159–161; war against, 94, 190–207; *Théâtre Anglais* by Jérôme Carré, 191; verses to Clairaut, 31 n; visited by Pennant, 141; on Young, 72, 96, 198.

Voltaire and Shakespeare, by Thomas Lounsbury, 161 n, 185 n, 206, 208 n, 250.

Voyage à Ermenonville, by Le Tourneur, 37–42.

Voyage au Cap de Bonne Espérance, by Le Tourneur, 137–139.

Voyage en Allemagne, by Riesbeck, 144 n.

Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, by Sparrman, 138–139.

Warburton, 184.
Werther, 97.
Wesley, John, 77 n.
Westermann, 75.
Wicherly, 181 n.
Wieland, 221.
Winter Piece, A, by Hervey,
 77.

Young, Edward, imitations of,
 73; influence in France, 75,
 96; in Germany, 76; in
 Italy, 76; *Le Tourneur's*
 translation of, 3, 4, 9, 10,
 11, 17, 37, 48-76, 79, 85,
 88, 92, 93, 95, 99, 101, 103,
 108, 114, 126, 127, 175, 176,
 211, 216, 225, 254, 255,
 257; *Night Thoughts*, 4, 15,
 44, 46, 47, 48, 53-67, 76,
 77, 78, 79, 174; *Nuits*, 47,
 50, 55, 59, 67, 72, 73 n, 87,
 88, 103, 133 n, 198, 241;
Œuvres diverses, 47, 67-70,
 175; Voltaire on, 72, 196,
 198; wild enthusiasm for,
 126, 133 n, 174, 192.
Young in Germany, by John
 Kind, 76 n.
Young, Le Poète Edward, by
 W. Thomas, 76 n.

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